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WORKS

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GLASGOW:

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LECTURES

ON THE

EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

ROMANS.

B.2830

BY

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LECTURE LI.

ROMANS, viii, 10.

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

I HAVE already affirmed, that to have Christ in us, is tantamount to the Spirit being in us. Christ dwells in us by the Holy Ghost. It is not because of this that the body is dead; but it is because of sin. The work of the Spirit in us does not counteract the temporal death of the body, however much it may counteract the second or eternal death to which the soul would have else been liable. It does not pour the elixir of immortality into the material frame—however much it may strengthen and prepare the imperishable spirit for its immortal well-being. Still, after Christ has taken up His abode within us and hath made a temple of our body, it is a temple that is to be destroyed. There remaineth a virus in the fabric, that sooner or later will work its dissolution; and as the law of temporal death is still unrepealed, even in the case of those whom Christ hath redeemed from the curse of the law; and as, in harmony with this palpable fact, there is still the doctrine that sin lurks and

lingers in the moral system even after the renovation which the Spirit hath given to it—this suggests a very important analogy, from the further prosecution of which we may perhaps gather, not a useless speculation, but a substantial and a practical benefit.

Suppose for a moment that the body, by some preternatural operation, were wholly delivered of its corrupt ingredient—that the sinful tendencies which reside there were not only kept in check, but eradicated, so that all its appetites were at one with the desires of a pure and perfect spirit—Then there would be nothing to hinder our reception even now into the courts of the celestial. With such a harmony in our moral system as a soul all whose aspirations were on the side of holiness, and nothing to thwart these aspirations in the materialism by which it was encompassed, we see nought awanting to constitute a heavenly or an angelic character—nor do we understand why death should in that case interpose betwcen our state of being upon earth, and our state of blessedness for ever. And accordingly, we read that on Nature's dissolution, when the dead shall rise from their graves in triumph, they who remain alive and who have never fallen asleep must, to become incorruptible also, at least be changed. The change on those who are alive and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, does for them what the death and the resurrection do for those who have been saints upon earth, ere they ascend as embodied saints into heaven. It is on the corruptible putting on incorruption, that the mortal puts on immortality; and the reason why

even those in whom Christ dwells have still a death to undergo, is that sin, though it no longer tyrannizes, still adheres to them—and the wearing down of the body by disease, and the arrest that is laid on all the functions and operations of its physiology, and the transformation of it into inanimate matter, and the mouldering of it into dust, and then its reascent from the grave in which it for ages may have lain—These it would appear are the steps of a refining process, whereby the now vile body is changed into a glorious one; and the regenerated spirit is furnished with its suitable equipment for the delights and the services of eternity.

To the question then, why is it, that, though Christ dwells in us, still the body is dead or liable to death—the answer is, 'because of sin;' and from this very answer do we gather, that sin is still present with every believer in the world, and as universally present too as death is universal. In regard to temporal death, there is one lot we know that falleth to the wicked and the righteous. And therefore though these two classes do not stand alike related to sin, yet both are so related to it as to partake in common of the mortality, which, ere they are so changed as to become incorruptible, all it appears must undergo.

The righteous, we all see, die in common with the wicked; and the text tells us that the death of the body is because of sin. There must therefore be something that respects sin, which the righteous hold in common with the wicked—seeing that, because of it, there is a common suffering which both

do undergo. What then is this common relation which they hold to sin as the cause, and in virtue of which they have a common participation in that bodily death that is here represented as the consequence?

In the first place, it cannot surely be that it is still inflicted on both as the judicial sentence which has been attached to transgression. It is very true, the announcement from the first has been, that he who sinneth shall die; and that, in reference to all from whom the condemnation hath not been turned away, temporal death may be regarded as forming a part of their sentence. But it cannot surely be viewed in this light, in reference to those of whom the Bible says that unto them there is no condemnation—in reference to those who savingly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so have the benefit of that expiation which He hath rendered, and of that everlasting righteousness which He hath brought in. It cannot for a moment be thought, that any suffering of theirs is at all requisite to complete that great satisfaction which was made on Calvary for the sins of the faithful. It is said of Him, who by one offering hath perfected the work of our reconciliation and made an end of iniquity, that He trode the winepress alone and that of the people there was none with Him. To Him belongs the whole glory of our atonement. He bore it all, for He looked and there was none to help, He wondered that there was none to uphold; and then did His own arm bring salvation. It cannot be that by any death of ours then, we eke out, as it were, the satisfaction which

hath been already rendered for sin; and when Paul says that he fills up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ in his flesh, it can never be that by any sufferings which the believer can endure, not even by the last and most appalling of them all, he makes good any deficiency in that great act, by which, and by which alone, transgression was finished, and the controversy between God and the sinner, is for ever set at rest.

The meaning then of a believer's death, is not to expiate the guilt of his sin—it is to root out the existence of it. It is not to cancel the punishment, for that is already done—it is to give the finishing blow, as it were, to the crucifixion of its power. It is not inflicted upon him as the last discharge of the wrath of God, after which he is conclusively delivered therefrom. But it is sent to him as a release from the plague and the presence of that corruption, which adheres, it would seem, as long as the body adheres to us. It has not, it would appear, been made part of the economy of grace, that, on our entering within its limits by accepting of the gospel, we are forthwith delivered from those ceaseless and besetting tendencies, which attach to our present bodily constitution. This could have been done without death. If a man, on the moment of believing, were just to be suddenly changed, in the way that they shall be who are alive at the last day, and are caught up alive to meet our Lord in the air—then at once would he have been made sinless in the material framework, as well as sinless in the regenerated part of his nature; and without the stepping-

stones of a death, and a resolution of his body into sepulchral rottenness and dust, and a resurrection of it free from the taint by which it now is pervaded—without these stepping-stones at all, might he at once have winged his ascent into heaven, and had its gate opened to him—because now, as free from the presence of sin as he was from its penalty. And thus, without passing at all through the dark valley of the shadow of death, might he have been put into immediate preparation for the pure and lofty communions of paradise. This might have been the order of God's administration, but it is not so in fact. He hath arranged it otherwise. He hath thought fit, instead of working a miraculous change on the appetites of the body, to work that change on the principles and desires of the spirit—to renew the inner man, but to perpetuate for a season the outer man. He hath thought fit to make that gospel by which peace is established between God and the believer—still to make it the harbinger, not of peace but of war, among the elements of that moral system which is in the believer himself. There might have been an instantaneous transition, to all the repose and harmony and serene triumph of a virtue, that actuated every faculty of the mind; and met with nothing to thwart or to impede its dictates, in the vile affections of a body that still would grovel, were it permitted, among its own base and sordid gratifications. But this is not the way in which it hath appeared meet unto the wisdom of God, that our translation shall take place from earth to heaven. Like the processes both of His

natural and His moral kingdom, this is accomplished not instantly but gradually; and there is a long intervening series of conflicts and exercises through life, and a death and a burial and a resurrection after it, ere the whole body and soul and spirit shall be fully matured for the high fellowships of eternity. And meanwhile, what Christ said of the world, holds true of every individual who receives Him—"I came not to bring peace but a sword." I came to raise an internal war among the feelings and the faculties of those who believe in me. I came to infuse a new principle within the limits of their moral economy, against which all the powers and principles of the old man will rise up in battle-array; and, instead of that harmony within which is felt by the seraph above, and even felt by many a secure and satisfied sinner below—there will be the war of rival tendencies, by which the believer's heart shall be kept in constant agitation; there will be all the pains and perplexities of many a sore conflict within; there will be an agony so fierce as to have been imaged in Scripture by a crucifixion; there will not, it is true, be unmitigated suffering—there will be a mixture of triumph and of tumult throughout the period of that singular transition which each believer must undergo—of triumph to that spirit which is now made willing, and of anguish to that body which is now made a sacrifice.

You see then, I trust, what that is of sin, which is common here to the children of light, and the children of this world; and what that is which constitutes the distinction between them. While

both are alive upon earth, they have both one kind of body; and just as the eye of each takes in the same impression from the same objects standing visibly before it, so are the appetites of each liable to the same inclination from the allurement of the same objects when brought within their reach. The unhappy drunkard, who, at the very sight of his inflaming beverage, is visited with an affection thereunto which he finds to be uncontrollable—suppose him to be made a convert at this moment, there is no change impressed by it upon his organ of taste. The relation that now subsists between his palate and the liquor that has so long and so frequently regaled it, is the same as before—the desire for it is not extinguished; and the physical affinity that now is between the appetite and its wonted indulgence, is not now changed into a physical repulsion. In the act of regeneration, the bodily affection is not eradicated; but there is infused into the moral system a power for keeping it in check: And, long after that the old man hath become a new creature, we do not see that the propensity which at one time tyrannized over him, is clearly and conclusively done away. It is not rooted out, my brethren. It is only resisted; and all that regeneration has done for him in the world, is to give him that moral force of determination and courage, by which he is enabled to resist it with success. He is now able to control that which before was uncontrollable. Were this and all his other rebel appetites only rooted out; and were he under the dominion of a pure and holy principle, and of it alone, to serve God on earth

without a struggle—then might he even now be borne aloft on angelic pinions; and placed, without so hideous a transition as that of failing and sickening and dying, in the city which hath foundations. But, no: this, it would appear, is the arena of his discipline for eternity; and it is so, by being an arena of contest. The elements of moral evil are not purged away from his corporeal framework; but there is a spiritual element infused, which, if it cannot destroy the former, will at least subordinate them. The apostle complained of his body being vile; but herein he exercised himself, to keep that body under subjection, lest he should be a cast-away. He is like unto a Heathen, in having a vile body. He is unlike unto a Heathen, in having now a spirit within him by which the body is subjected. Both have in them the desires of nature; but the one fights with these desires, and the other fulfils them. Both are lured by solicitations to evil; but while the one is only lured, the other is led by them. He is led away with divers lusts. He is led away with the error of the wicked, and so falls from his stedfastness. The very same evil propensity might offer to lead both; but while the one consents to be so led, the other refuses. He gives himself up to be led by another master. In the language of the apostle, he is led by the Spirit of God, and so approves himself to be one of God's children. He is led by the Spirit, and so fulfilleth not the lusts of the flesh.

You also see what the use of death is to a Christian. It is not laid upon him as a sentence of

condemnation. The whole weight of that sentence is already borne. It is not to complete his justification. That is already perfected for ever by the one offering. It is to release him in fact from his warfare. It is to deliver him from the presence of his great enemy. It is to remove from him that load under which he now groans being burdened, and which forced from the holy apostle the exclamation of his wretchedness. It is to assure him who hath fought the good fight, and hath finished his course, that the battle is now ended, and that now the repose and the triumph of victory await him. To the last hour of his life, it is the same foul and tainted body that it ever was; and his only achievement upon it, is not that he hath purified its nature, but that he hath not suffered it to have the mastery. He has all along been upheld against its encroachments, by the vigour of a counteracting principle within, even of that Spirit which is life because of righteousness. These two have been in perpetual conflict with each other, from the hour of the heavenly birth to the hour of the earthly dissolution; and the way in which it is terminated, is, not by the body in its present state being transformed, but by the body in its present state being destroyed.

The fact of the body being still subjected to death because of sin, is the strongest experimental argument that can be urged for heaven being a place to which sin can find no entry. It is not in the way of penalty that the Christian has to die—for the whole of that penalty has already been sustained. It is not exacted from him as the payment of a debt

—for Christ our surety hath paid a full and a satisfying ransom. It is not then to help out the justification which is already complete in him—nor to remove a flaw from that title-deed which we have received perfect from His hand. It stands connected, in short, with the sanctification of the believer; and has nought to do with that sentence which Christ has fully expiated, with that legal chastisement which was laid upon Him who bore it all. The whole amount and meaning of it is, that our bodies are impregnated with a moral virus which might be discharged from them, it is certain, by a fiat of the Almighty—even as with those who shall be found alive on the day of resurrection. But this is not the way in which God hath seen meet so to discharge it. It is by death that the thing is to be done. It is, in the first instance, by the departure of the spirit breaking out of its tainted and leprous prison-hold—and then by the resolution into fragments and into dust, of this materialism that its tenant hath abandoned—and then by the assembling again of all its particles, but without the corrupt infusion that formerly pervaded it—And so the transformation of the whole into what is now called a glorified body—a body like unto that of Christ, and free now even from the tendency to evil. And not till the whole of this change take effect upon it, is it fit for admission to the upper realms of love and purity and righteousness. The justice of God would have recoiled from the acceptance of a sinner, and so an expiation had to be made; and the holiness of that place where God dwelleth, would have recoiled

from the approaches of one whose character was still tainted with sin, even though its guilt had been expiated—and so it is, that there must be a sanctification as well as an atonement—there must be a renewal as well as a sacrifice. 'For the one, Christ had to suffer and to die—for the other man has also to die, and so to fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ. And it is indeed a most emphatic demonstration of heaven's sacredness, that, to protect its courts from violation, not even the most pure and sainted Christian upon earth, can, in his present earthly garb, find admittance therein—that loved and revered as he is by his friends and his family, and little as they see about him of that which is unworthy even of fellowship with angels, still, that even he would be deemed a nuisance in that high and holy place where nothing that offendeth can enter—that ere the gate of the New Jerusalem be opened for his spirit, he must leave his tainted body behind him; and ere he walk embodied there, the framework that he had on earth must first be taken down, and be made to pass in mysterious transformation, through that dismal region of skulls and of skeletons, where the mouldering wreck of many human generations is laid. This death, which even the holiest of believers have to undergo, speaks loudly both to the loathsomeness of sin, and to the sensitive the lofty sacredness of heaven: And oh how should it teach all, who by faith have admitted the hope of glory into their hearts, that, in so doing, they have embarked on a warfare against moral evil—that the expectation of bliss in heaven is at

utter variance with the wilful indulgence of sin upon earth—and that, by the very act of embracing the gospel, they have thrown down the gauntlet of hostility to sin; and they must struggle against it, and pray against it, and prevail against it.

Now this principle of hostility to sin wherewith the believer is actuated, cometh down upon him like every other good and perfect gift from above. All that is evil about him still cometh from himself, and from the vile body by which he is encompassed. The gracious ingredient of his now regenerated nature, does not extinguish the corrupt ingredient of it. It only, as it were, keeps it down; and, without delivering him from its presence, delivers him from its prevalency and its power. This it is which constitutes the struggle of the Christian life. This is the sore conflict which is carried on through many discouragements, and perhaps some defeats, and at least frequent alternations and variations of fortune. Nevertheless, throughout all the fluctuations of this spiritual history, the seed of blissful immortality is there; the element of a holy and celestial nature is at work; the honest aspiration after God and godliness will never be extinguished. A life of well-doing, and a produce in the fruits of righteousness, will force their way among all the impediments of a vile materialism. These two rival and opposing ingredients will at length be detached the one from the other; and of these the body will become dead because of sin, and the spirit be life because of righteousness.

With an unconverted man there are not two

such conflicting elements. The mind and the body are at one. The evil tendencies are given way to. He not only submits to the instigations of the flesh; but, in the language of Scripture, he sows unto the flesh, that is, he devises and deliberately provides expedients for its gratification—laying up for the flesh, as well as fulfilling the lusts thereof. The whole man pulls as it were in one direction; and that is a direction altogether towards the creature, and altogether away from the Creator. He soweth unto the flesh, and of the flesh, he shall reap corruption. As he falleth, so shall he rise; and the body wherewith he is enveloped on the day of resurrection, will not, like that of the glorified saint, be expurgated of its tendencies to evil: But as he indulged them through life, so will they rise up against him in the full vigour of their absolute and imperious sway; and be his merciless, his inexorable tormentors, through all eternity. As he never resisted them with effect here, so there will he find them to be irresistible. They will lord it over him; and he be the miserable slave of vile and worthless affections, under the sense of which his now convicted soul cannot escape from the agonies of remorse, that undying worm, which gives to hell its fiercest anguish, and far its sorest tribulation. He thus pursued by a fire that is unquenchable within, and a fear without of that holy and righteous countenance that is now turned in rebuke towards him, will be made to taste of that second death which has been called the wages of sin, because it is both its penal and its natural consummation.

Not so with him, whose spirit has been made righteous; and who vexed and annoyed with the urgencies of his vile body, has, to the hour of death, carried on against it a resolute and unsparing warfare. He will have no part in the second death. His spirit because of its righteousness has become meet for that life, which is both spiritual and everlasting. So soon as it quits its earthly tenement, it will be with Christ in Paradise, where, freed from the incumbrances of a tainted materialism, it will instantly find—that, though to live for a season in the flesh was needful and salutary, yet to have departed and to be with Christ is far better. He soweth to the Spirit here, and hereafter he shall reap of the Spirit life everlasting. He has the very evil tendencies which the other hath who soweth unto the flesh; but, instead of giving to them his consent, he enters with them into combat, and he fights the good fight which terminates in victory, and he earns the blessedness of him that overcometh, and of him that endureth unto the end. Those inclinations of a corrupt nature, which the other pampered into lordly and domineering appetites, that will wield, for ever their merciless tyranny over him, he hath in every way thwarted and buffeted and starved—so that though still alive while the breath was in his body, and he had even to weep their presence on his death-bed, and still to mourn even then the carnalities and the spiritual sins which he could not utterly extinguish—yet his reward is, that, at the moment of dissolution, they will expire for ever; and not be raised up again to be his plagues and his persecutors through

eternity. The reward is, that his risen body shall then be in fullest harmony with the desires of his glorified spirit—and that the evil instigations which so perplex and disquiet him on earth, shall never haunt nor harass him in heaven. He will be altogether freed from those corrupt elements, which still adhere to the unbeliever when he arises from his grave, and which constitute in fact the elements of his moral hell. There will be nothing adverse to the love or to the services of God in any part of his constitution; and he will be fully enabled to glorify the Lord, with his soul and body and spirit, which are the Lord's.

This is not an idle speculation. It may be carried personally and practically to the conscience. Are you or are you not engaged in a warfare with moral evil? Are you busily employed in the work of subduing and bringing under discipline, all the irregularities of your perverse nature? Or, instead of this, are you in peace with yourself; and that because of the friendly terms, in which your spirit and your body are with each other? Remember that there is a peace where there is no peace. Do you imagine that you are at peace with God, because you believe the gospel? Remember that Paul preached the gospel, yet, had he not kept the body under subjection, he would have been a castaway. And therefore in this did he always exercise himself, mortifying his affections for the things which are beneath—and this not only the grosser affections of our nature, but the more reputable, the more refined, the affections for wealth, for honour, for fame, for literary reputation—for these too

are among the things which are beneath—these also will perish in the using—these have their place on earth, and have no place in heaven; and it is only by the spirit being above all these, and resting its affections on the things which are above, it is only thus that it will be made to inherit life, and because of its righteousness.

LECTURE LII.

ROMANS, viii, 11, 12.

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh."

VER. 11. In the last verse it is affirmed that Christ being in us will not avail to prevent the death of the body, though it will avail to the preparing of the soul for life everlasting. And in the present verse, the apostle recurs to the body, and now affirms that it too, will at length have a benefit conferred on it—that neither is it altogether overlooked in this great work of regeneration—that though permitted for a season to moulder in the dust, and though every vestige of what it was is made to disappear; yet will it emerge from the hideous receptacle in which it lies, and come forth a quickened and a glorified body on the day of resurrection—that though the present occupation of it by God's Holy Spirit, does not save it from decaying into a loathsome spectacle of corruption; yet if that Spirit dwell in us now, it will again animate that matter which has gone into dissolution—raising it to a new framework, and investing it as before with all those graces which are expressive of the life and sensibility within. But it is to be observed that the wicked as well as the righteous are to rise again—that all the dead both small and great are to stand before God—

and that therefore there must be a something which peculiarizes the resurrection of the believer, from that of a sinful and unconverted man. Now we know of no other peculiarity than this—that his body shall be delivered from that moral virus against which he struggled through life, and by overcoming which he is to be rewarded with a complete and conclusive exemption from its presence for ever—that the same power which helped him to the conquest, will rid him altogether of his enemy; and his body will be so purified and transformed, as to become like unto the glorious body of Christ. The wicked are not so. As the tree falleth so it lies; and as they went to their graves, with all the propensities of corruption unmitigated, they will again come forth from their graves, with these propensities in lordly and despotic rigour to be their tyrants and their tormentors through all eternity. And this, I imagine, will explain a verse which enters into the prophetic narrative of the earthly consummation of all things—"He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he which is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy still."

Now it is, in the first place, to be remarked—that the very same agent who raised up Christ from the dead, is to raise up all who are in Christ also. That He was the agent employed by God in the resurrection of the Saviour, may, I think, be gathered from the passage, where it is said, that He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection

from the dead;—and still more obviously from the text (and this we hold to be the reason why is it said of Christ risen from the dead, that He is become the first-fruits of them who slept)—"Every man in his own order—Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they who are Christ's at his coming." But there is a still more important set of passages that point, we think, to a very pleasing analogy, between Christ's resurrection from the grave, and the resurrection of our souls into newness of life—that ascribe both of these events to the operation of the same power; and regard it as alike the functions of the Holy Ghost, to have restored the natural life to the body of the Saviour, when it lay insensible in the tomb—and the spiritual to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, but are awakened from this death at the moment of believing in Him. And thus I would understand it of Paul that he longs to make sure of the renewal of his soul unto holiness, when he speaks of his desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection; and I can enter into the analogy which he states in these words, that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead in the glory of his Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life—and that thus it is that we are planted together with Christ, in the likeness of His resurrection. We read in various places of our being made conformable to His death by dying unto sin; and so are we made conformable to His resurrection by living unto righteousness. The thing is still more expressly affirmed in the epistle to the Ephesians, where mention is made of "the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe,

according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all." And then he adds, "you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" —"Even when we are dead in sins, hath God quickened us together with Christ."

Now this analogy between the raising of the body and the regeneration of the soul, both of which are ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit, forcibly reminds us of the history of the material creation in the book Genesis—where it is distinctly affirmed, that, at the very first footsteps of that glorious transformation, by which a dark and disordered chaos was evolved into light and loveliness and harmony, that then the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And so when the Spirit begins with the soul of man, it is a perfect chaos of moral darkness and disorder on which it has to operate—whence it gradually advances from one degree of grace and godliness unto another, till, as God rejoiced on the seventh day over that which a little before was without form and void, so God rejoices over us, when, in looking to the product of this new or second creation, He sees that it is all very good. You know enough, I trust, of our depravity by nature—to admit of our moral world

that it is indeed a chaos—that, though there be occasional gleams of the bright and the beautiful, yet that the great master sin of ungodliness stalks triumphant over the face of society—that, though, as in every companionship even of iniquity, there must be recognised principles of truth and honour and fellowship which bind together the members of the human commonwealth, and make it a possible thing for society to subsist, yet that, as if altogether broken loose from the great original of Being, each individually hath betaken himself to the counsel of his own heart and the sight of his own eyes. The enlightened assertors of a native and original corruption in our species, never dispute that there is much of the fair and amiable and upright in human intercourse; and that this gives rise to many fine and graceful evolutions in the walks of social life. But what they affirm, and they deem that they have the experimental light both of observation and conscience upon their side, is, that while busily engaged, whether in the virtues or in the vices of our intercourse with each other, we one and all of us by nature have renounced our proper intercourse with God—that, intimately joined as we are to our fellows of the species by the ties of patriotism and neighbourhood and family affection, we live in a state of moral and spiritual disjunction from God—that just as if the gravitation that bound our planet to the great central luminary of our system were suspended, and it were to take its own random way in space, so have broke adrift as it were from that main attraction to which all the duties and moralities of life are subordinate. And just as

the stray world might still have active physical principles of its own—its cohesion, and its magnetism, and its laws of fluidity, and its busy atmospherical processes, even after the sun had ceased to have the imperial sway over it.—So, in our stray species, are there a thousand mutual and internal principles of constant operation—the resentment, and the love, and the domestic affinities, and the dread of authority, and the delight in approbation, and the sense of shame, and the mighty power which lies in the awards of the general voice—principles these, which, in their turn, either agitate or arouse or restrain or even embellish the face of society—Yet still may it be a society altogether without the regard or the reverence of God. In reference to Him, the family of mankind may be an exiled family; and while the men of its successive generations pass through the little hour of life, some deformed by earthly vices, and others decked in the ornaments of an earth-born morality, yet, equally aloof as all may still be from the virtue of that great relationship which is between the thing that is formed and Him who hath formed it, it may still hold true of our species, that we by nature are in a state of disruption from God—asunder from Him as to all right and habitual fellowship in time; and, if we decline the reunion which He himself proposes, likely to remain thus asunder from the great fountain of light and love and happiness through all eternity.

Now that this is the very chaos in which humanity is involved, we hold to be pretty obvious from the broad and general aspect of society. But

far the most useful conviction that can be wrought upon this subject, is that which is carried home to the bosom of individuals, by a manifestation of their own heart to the conscience of each of them. It is not possible to lay open the characters of all to the inspection of any; but it may be possible to lay open the character of any man to the inspection of himself—and thus it is, that far the most profitable of all moral demonstrations, whether from the pulpit or from the press, are those which reveal to each individually the intimacies of his own spirit; and by which he is enabled, as in a mirror, to recognise such a likeness to the portrait of his own inner man as his conscience can respond unto. And therefore would we bid each unconverted man who is now present, to enter upon this recognizance of himself, and to see whether the very habit of his soul is not a habit of practical atheism—whether it be not true that God is scarcely if at all in his thoughts—whether he be not an utter stranger to the gait and the attitude of His servant—and whether the question is ever taken up, or ever brought to a conclusion, that is afterwards in very deed and history proceeded on, 'What is the will of God in the matter before me?' We do not charge you with any transgression against the social or domestic principles of our nature—any more than we deny of a rambling planet which now flounders its capricious and unregulated way in space, that there the chemical affinities, or there the active play of all those influences which belong to its own peculiar and physical system, are unknown. But we do charge you with the disownal of the authority of

God. We affirm that against Him you have deeply revolted. We cannot deny many of you have much of secular worth and excellence. But we deny that you have the least tint of sacredness. You are not demoralized out of all virtue, but you are desecrated out of all godliness; and we appeal to the distinctly felt current of you plans and purposes and desires, or we appeal to the familiar history of your every day, whether the will of God be the reigning principle of your mind, whether God can be said to have the rule over you.

Now Christianity is a restorative system. Its object is to reinstate the authority of God over the wills and consciences of men; and by this great and ascendant power of moral gravitation, again brought back to its influence over our heart, to reclaim our wandering species into that duteous conformity to Himself from which they have departed so widely. What he wants is to restore us to our wonted place among the goodly orbs of His own favoured and unfallen creation; and this He does simply by turning away ungodliness from our hearts. It is to set up that ancient and primeval law, by which the creature is bound to recognise the Creator in all his ways—so that instead of fluctuating as heretofore through the mazes of error and wilfulness and sin, he might walk with assured footsteps on that right and lofty path, which is defined by Heaven's jurisprudence, and to which he is willingly constrained by Heaven's grace. And it is thought, that, though godliness be a single principle out of the many which operate on the heart, yet that upon its re-establishment alone,

there would instantly emanate a peace and a virtue that should be felt in all the departments of our nature. The benevolence would be stimulated, and the justice become greatly more strict and sensitive, and the temperance and purity be more guarded than ever, and the malignant propensities be kept in check and at last exterminated—and so all the secondary and earthly moralities, which may and do exist without godliness, attain by godliness, a far brighter lustre and a far more effective and salutary ascendant over the character and interests of our species. Even as the planet, that, without the scope of the law of gravitation to the sun, has deviated from its path, yet retained the principles which be at work throughout its mass and upon its surface—restore to it this single law which for a season has been suspended, and you do a great deal more than simply reclaim it to the old elliptic path which it was wont to revolve in. You impress and you vivify all the operations of the terrestrial mechanism—you call those tides into force and action, which arouse the sluggish ocean out of its unwholesome stagnancy—and you set afloat through the air those refreshing currents, by which its purity is upholden—and you pour abroad that beauteous element of light, which, with its accompanying warmth both stimulates all the processes, and discloses all the graces and the laws of the vegetable kingdom—And, in a word, you, by this single restoration, turn the else desolate and unpeopled globe into a vast habitation of life and of enjoyment, where the notes of cheerfulness may be heard on every side; and there may be seen the works of

busy design, the abodes of industry and comfort, the temples of piety.

Now it is the Spirit who evolved matter out of the chaotic state; and it is the Spirit who renews a living body out of the putrefaction into which it had mouldered; and it is the very same agent, even the Spirit of God, who renovates the heart of man, and forms him anew into righteousness and true holiness. It is a doctrine that is mightily nauseated in this our day—forming, as it does, one of the most offensive peculiarities of the gospel; and perhaps more fitted than any other to revolt into antipathy, both the natural and literary taste of those who hear of it. It is therefore the more desirable, when any thing can be alleged, which might propitiate you in its favour. And surely—if you can be at all affected by the contrast between the loathsomeness of the grave, and the gracefulness of a living form invested with the bloom and vigour of immortality; or between the turbulence of warring elements, and that magnificent harmony of animate and inanimate things which has been made to emerge therefrom into our goodly world—this should enlist you altogether on the side of so beneficent an agency; and, instead of that felt and invisible repugnance wherewith the doctrine of the Holy Ghost as our refiner and as our sanctifier is listened to by men, you should hail those informations of the Bible, by which you are given to understand that the same plastic energy, which moved on the face of the waters at the beginning, and has since moulded the very dust into organism and living beauty—that this too is the principle of that new creation, which,

out of ruined and distempered humanity, raises, upon every true disciple of Jesus, the worth and the excellence that fit him for immortality.

But better than all speculation on this topic, would it be that you prized the operation of the Spirit on your heart, and that you earnestly and habitually prayed for it. The doctrine of the Holy Ghost is too much neglected in practice. It is not adverted to, that all acceptable virtue in man is the product of a creating energy, that is actually put forth upon him; and that it is his business to wrestle in supplication with Heaven, that it may indeed be put forth upon himself. And this is the order in which the graces and embellishments of the new creature spring up in the believer. Ere God will pour them on his person, he must enquire after them. The Spirit of grace and supplication is generally given, ere the things which it is your part to supplicate for are given. And therefore be not surprised at your miserable progress in sanctification, if a stranger to the habit of prayer. Wonder not and complain not, that strength to help your infirmities is still withheld, if you have not mixed the prayer of faith with your severe yet ineffectual struggles against the power of corruption. Think not that you are to overcome, if, with all the humbleness of a needy and dependent creature, you do not look up to a power that is greater than your own; and if you give not the glory of all holiness in the creature, to that high and heavenly influence which cometh down from the Creator. You have never yet known what the receipt is for making you virtuous, if, to this hour, you have been igno-

rant or inexperienced as to the efficacy of prayer. Though you should have tried every thing else beside; you are still morally in a state of helpless and hopeless disease. And therefore, with all the eagerness of a patient who has been enquiring and experimenting for years about the right method of being healed, take yourself now to this prescription; and see whether a blessing will not come out of it. And, like those medicines which are of daily application, should you pray without ceasing. It should be a regimen of prayer. Earnest prayer and vigorous performance should be always alternating the one with the other. A good word with God in secret, qualifies for a good work with man in society. And, on the other hand, your deeds of righteousness with the hand, will send back an influence upon the heart, that shall brighten and inflame its sacredness. You will strive mightily according to the grace of God that worketh in you mightily. The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead will dwell in you, if you make Him welcome; and prayer may be regarded as your invitation to Him, as the expression of your welcome. And the Spirit so dwelling will be indeed the earnest of your inheritance—He who quickens you from the death of trespasses and sins shall quicken your mortal bodies from that death of nature which comes upon all men.

Ver. 12, 'Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.'

The debtor is bound in certain duties or obligations to his creditor; and the Apostle here tells us, that we are not so bound to the flesh. It has its

demands upon us, and it would fain exact our compliance with them; but this is a compliance which it is not incumbent upon us to render. We shall not, as I have often affirmed in your hearing, be released on this side of death from the hateful exposure of having to feel its instigations; but that is no reason why we should follow these instigations. We are subject here to the annoyance of being oft solicited by this tempter; but we are not therefore bound to yield ourselves up unto him. Living as we do in the flesh, we are at all times in contact with its near and besetting urgencies; but there is no such acquiescence due on our part, as that we shall live after the flesh. This last is the debt wherefrom the text releases us—nay, in the next verse, the most forcible motive is presented to us, why, instead of acquiescing, we should resist to the uttermost. For if we live after the flesh we shall die. The motive in fact is as strong, as that which Adam, who lived under the first covenant, had to abstain from eating the forbidden fruit. In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die. So that there cannot be a more gross misunderstanding of the gospel economy, than that it is destitute of as plain and direct and intelligible sanctions against moral evil, as those which were devised for upholding the legal economy. Under both are we deterred from sin by the threatening of death; and the only difference between them is, that—whereas under the law one sin, however lenient in its character, or however strong and sudden the temptations were which hurried the unhappy victim onward to the commission of it, inferred the whole

penalty—under the gospel, death is represented to be the effect as well as the penalty of such a character as has been formed in us by the habit of sinning, by the preference on our part of a carnal to a spiritual life, by a surrender of ourselves to the power of any evil affection—So that, instead of struggling against it and barring its ascendancy over us, we permit the ascendancy, and become the slaves of one against whom we should have fought with all the determination and hatred of honest enemies. This we must either do, or consent to live after the flesh; and against the latter alternative there is lifted under the dispensation of grace, as clear and decisive a warning of terror, as ever was lifted under the dispensation of works. We read in the book of Genesis how God said to Adam, that in the day that thou eatest of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt surely die. And in this epistle to the Romans, in this most complete record of evangelical truth, and amongst all its rich promises of grace and pardon and remission from every legal consequence to believers, do we also read, that if we live after the flesh we shall as surely die.

But while there is this resemblance between the two dispensations, there is also a difference between them; and the difference might be illustrated by help of another text taken from the writings of Paul, and one of those very few in which there occurs the same term, debtor. He says of a judaizing Christian who insisted on the rite of circumcision as being essential to our acceptance with God, that, if circumcised upon this ground,

he was a debtor to do the whole law; and that, in the act of becoming so, he would fall from grace, and cease in fact to have the privileges or the immunities of a believer. Now what is this to say, but that a Christian is not a debtor to do the whole law, and yet he is a debtor to live not after the flesh? He is not bound to the faultless obedience of a perfect commandment; and yet he is bound to a hearty and sustained warfare against all sin, which is a violation of the commandment. He is no longer under the economy of do *this* and live; and yet he is under an economy, where if he give himself up to the doing of what is opposite to *this*, he shall most inevitably die. The truth is, that both the one economy and the other are on the side of moral righteousness; and both proceed alike on this undoubted position, that there can be fellowship between God and iniquity, and that the heaven where He and His holy angels dwell, is a place where not a creature can find admittance, that has upon him the slightest taint or remainder of evil. And thus the law condemned the sinner to exile from heaven; but, after having done so, it could not restore him thereunto. It had no provision within its limits, by which it could either annul its own threatenings; or purge away from our now contaminated race that foul spiritual leprosy, the very existence of which, apart from the consideration of legal penalties altogether, barred the entrance of mankind from the habitations of unspotted sacredness. Under its continued administration, we had no release from our past guilt, and no remedy from either our present or our fu-

ture sinfulness; and, in these vile bodies, how was it possible to escape the necessity of perpetual additions to the account which was against us—since, in the high reckoning of a holy and heart-searching law, the very existence of an evil thought, the very inroad of a wrong or licentious imagination, would be deemed and dealt with as the transgression of an offender? And therefore it was that this economy had to be suspended, and another set up with distinct principles and provisions of its own, that might render it competent for the sinner's restoration to that heaven which he had forfeited, and for admittance into which he both laboured under a legal and a personal incapacity. There needed to be a skilful adaptation for purposes so very mysterious, that angels are represented as looking on with the eye of eager and unappeased curiosity. And herein lay the profound, the unsearchable wisdom of the gospel, by which the guilt of the believer's sin was cancelled, and by which the existence of it upon his character is at length done away. He had to be saved by water and by blood. There is an atonement to do away the curse of sin, and there is a purification to do away its defilement. And thus, to complete our salvation, was it not enough that Christ bowed His head unto the sacrifice. When He rose again, He claimed, as the fruit of His obedience unto the death, the promise of His Father—the Holy Ghost given by Him to those who believe—the power over heaven and earth, by which He might subdue all things unto Himself; and, more especially, by which He might aid the moral warfare that is going on among

His disciples here below, and at length so change their vile bodies as that they might be fashioned like unto His glorious body—So that, delivered alike from the presence and penalty of sin, every barrier may be removed, and every hindrance may be done away to unexceptionable admittance within the limits of the sanctuary that is above.

Behold then the very nice adaptation to our state as sinners, of that gospel economy whereby the legal economy has been suspended and superseded—because to our condition, as the wretched outcasts of a violated law, it brought no relief, and could bring no restoration. Under the former dispensation, every sin, however trivial and though urged to it by the besetting propensities of a constitution marred and vitiated since the fall, plunged us more hopelessly than ever in guilt and in moral helplessness. Under the present dispensation, we are not without sin; but the sin of infirmity is not like the sin of wilfulness, unto death—and there has been a sacrifice provided, in the faith of which if we make daily confession we shall have daily forgiveness. So long as we are in these accursed bodies, it is impossible ever to venture off from any other foundation for our acceptance before God, than the perfect righteousness of Christ; and the very sin of our nature has the effect to remind us of our dependence, and to keep us closely and tenaciously thereupon. But, meanwhile, though vexed and annoyed by the instigations of the flesh, we are armed with a resolution and a strength and an affection for what is spiritual, that shall abundantly secure our not living after the flesh; and

on the generous mind of the new-born Christian, the daily infirmities which he has to lay at the throne of grace, so far from working an indifference to moral righteousness, only shame and stimulate him the more to the vigorous prosecution of it. And the knowledge, that, though the infirmities of his flesh will be pardoned, yet that if he live after the flesh he will die, this is to him as direct and urgent excitement, as ever bore with practical effect on the legal aspirants after a reward and an acceptance of their own. And thus are the comfort after sin on the one hand, and the impulse to renewed holiness on the other, most admirably blended in such a way, as best to suit those who are weighed down with a corrupt materialism, yet are furnished with power in the inner man to war against and at length to overcome it; and the disciple who is thus employed can, at one and the same time, draw comfort from the saying that if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father —and derive the energy of a practical impulse from the saying, that "if any man sin wilfully, after that he hath received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries."

LECTURE LIII.

ROMANS, viii, 12—15.

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

VER. 13. 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.'

And in like manner as the threatenings under the law and the gospel may be compared with each other, so may the promises or the rewards. By the former dispensation, he who fell into an act of disobedience was adjudged to die; and by the latter, he who by living after the flesh lived in a habit of disobedience was in like manner to die. It is well that we are liberated from the rigid and unbending economy of the law; for thus we are set free from the fears, and the scrupulosities, and in fact the utter and irretrievable despair, which would have paralysed the whole work of obedience. But it is also well, that, while the economy of the gospel has achieved our deliverance from these, it still lifts as loud a testimony on the side of righteousness, and is actuated by as determined a hostility against all sin—so as to set all its honest disciples upon a most resolved and persevering opposition to it. Had law been the arbiter of this contest,

they never, in the vile bodies wherewith they are encompassed, they never could have obtained the meed or the honour of victory—each error being an irrecoverable defeat—each infirmity being a death-blow to their cause. And therefore it is well that they now fight under the banners of another umpire, who can see, amid all the frailties of the old and the natural constitution, that there is rising and strengthening apace a force of moral resistance against the urgencies of corrupt nature, which is gradually undermining its ascendancy, and at length will overthrow it. The man who has been endowed with this force from on high, is ever reminded by the frailties that are within of his daily need of Christ's propitiation; and would give up the battle in despair, had he not the righteousness of Christ to build upon. Yet he never forgets that the battle is his unceasing occupation—that the gospel which has discharged him from the penalties of a law that he is ever falling short of, has not discharged him from this warfare—that his business is so to strive against all the corruption which is in him, as to make unceasing approximation to the purity and perfection of this very law; and that though now exempted from the threat if ye fail in one jot or tittle thereof ye shall die—the threat is still against him and against all in full operation, that if, casting off the authority of the law, ye give yourselves up to your own heart's desire, or live after the flesh ye shall die.

Now the like analogy and the like distinction may be observed in the promises or rewards of the gospel, when compared with those of the law. The

apostle says of the law, that it is not of faith, but the man that doeth this shall live; and he saith in our text of him who hath embraced that gospel which supersedes the law, that if a man through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body he shall live. There is a doing to which death is annexed with as great certainty under the one economy as under the other. And there is also a doing to which life is annexed with as great certainty under the one economy as under the other. The 'do this and live' of the former dispensation however, is a condition which has long been violated; and which, in our present tainted materialism, we never can attain unto; and which therefore, instead of indicating to us a practical avenue to heaven, is like a flaming sword that guards and bars in every way our access thereunto. The 'mortify the deeds of the body and live' of the latter dispensation, is a condition again which might be rendered; which every believer in the grace and righteousness of the Lord Jesus will be enabled to perform; which from this moment we should set ourselves forward to for the purpose of making it good—and so exhibit in our history as direct a practical impulse taken from the hopes of the gospel, as any servant from the prospect of his wages, or any labourer under the covenant of works could take from the remunerations of the law. And in this warfare against the body, an advantage may sometimes have been gained by it, such an advantage as the law would have irretrievably condemned us for, and declared against us all the ruin and disgrace of a fatal overthrow; but such an advantage as under the gospel though

it has cast us down yet will not destroy us—but, after perhaps a severe discipline of mortification and sorrow, will arm us with fresh resolution for the contest; and inspire into us a more cordial hatred against the body of sin, and all its sinful instigations, than ever; and give to the heart a more burning earnestness, that we may not only recover all the ground which we have lost, but may rise more aloft than ever above all the gross and terrestrial ingredients of our corrupt nature—till, having passed through a series of watchfulness and endurance and busy working, and so having made full proof of our discipleship, we can say with the apostle when the time of our departure is at hand, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith—Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me on that day, and not to me only but also unto all such as love his appearing."

From the expression 'to mortify the deeds of the body' I may here advert to that law of our moral constitution, by which it is that if we refuse to perform a sinful deed, we by that very refusal weaken the sinful desire which prompted it; and that thus by mortifying the deeds you mortify the desires. Every act of sinful indulgence, arms with a new force of ascendancy the sinful inclination. Every act of luxury makes you more the slave of the table than before. Every draught of the allurring beverage, might bring you nearer to the condition of him who is the victim of a habitual intoxication. Every improper licence granted to the eye

or the imagination, sinks you into more helpless captivity under their power. Every compliance with lawless appetite, enthrones more firmly than before another oppressor, another tyrant over you. And therefore if you want to dethrone the appetite, refuse the indulgence; if you want to starve and enfeeble the desires of the inner man, mortify the deeds of the outer man. Begin in a plain way the work of reformation. And let it be the resolute purpose on which you shall put forth all the manhood of your soul, that, however you may be solicited by the affections that are within to that which is evil, you shall not give the actions that are without to their hateful service—that however sin may have been desired, sin shall not be done by you—that with the control which you have over the hand and the tongue and all the organs of the body, they shall with you not be the instruments of sin but the instruments of righteousness: And thus it is that the corrupt propensities of the heart, wearied out with resistance, and languishing under the constant experience of hopeless and fruitless solicitation, would at length weaken and expire. The body would be mortified; and the soul, delivered from its presence, and again translated into it after the last taint and remainder of its evil nature had been done away, would find itself in a perfect condition for the joys and the services of life everlasting.

But it is well to mark, that, in order to make this mortifying of the deeds of the body effectual unto life, it must be done through the Spirit. For the very same thing might in great measure be done

without special grace from on high, in which case it hath no fruit in immortality. How many are the evil passions, which can at least be restrained by the pure force of a natural determination. In the pursuits of fortune, or of ambition, or of war, what a violence a man can put upon himself—what a heroic self-denial he is capable of carrying into full operation—what a mastery he can reach over some of the most urgent inclinations of nature; and all this certainly without one particle of a sanctifying influence, but rather by the strength and power of one unrenewed principle lording it with a high ascendancy over all the rest. To make then the mortification of your earthly desires available for heaven, there must be an agency from the Holy Ghost—else there is nought of heaven's character in the work, and will be nought of heaven's reward to it. And if the Holy Ghost indeed be the agent, then He will not select a few of our carnal tendencies for extermination by His power; but He will enter into hostility with all of them—He will check the sensuality of our nature, and He will mortify its pride, and He will check its impetuous anger, and He will wean it from its now clinging avarice. Let it be your care then, from the very first moment of your strenuous resistance to these deeds and affections of evil—let it be your care, that, instead of trusting to the energy of your own firm and high-minded resolves, you invoke the constant supplies of aid from a higher quarter. Let yours be a life of prayer along with a life of performance; and then will you strive mightily, but according at the same time to the grace of God that worketh in you mightily.

Ver. 14. 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God.'

There is frequent cognizance taken in the Bible, of the degrees in which the Spirit of God may operate on the heart of man. There is one work from which He ceases, because He will not always strive; and there is another work which after He hath begun, He will carry on even unto perfection. There is a tasting of God's Spirit by those who afterwards fall away; and there is an anointing by God's Spirit that remaineth. It is this which hath given room to the distinction made by theologians, between the saving and the ordinary influences of the Holy Ghost,—the former signifying those by which a man is effectually called unto the faith, and afterwards completed in the sanctification of the gospel; and the latter signifying those by which he is made to feel the stirrings of a conviction, and a desire and even a partial delight in many of the accompaniments of sacredness, which, had he improved, would have been followed up with larger measures of grace and illumination—but which as he quenched, do at length vanish into nothing, and leave him short of the kingdom of God. In these circumstances it were well, if any definite or satisfactory mark could be assigned, by which to discriminate between the one set of influences and the other—by which to ascertain whether we have only so much of this heavenly influence as will suffice for condemning our resistance to it; or so much as will carry us forward to a meetness for the inheritance above, as will be effectual for salvation.

Now the verse before us supplies us with the test

that is wanted. There are many who are solicited by the Spirit of God, yet who are not led by Him —many to whom the Spirit offers the guidance of His light and of His direction, but who refuse that guidance—many, we believe all, to whom the Holy Ghost hath made through conscience that ear of the inner man the intimations of His will, yet most of whom have not followed these intimations. They have been in so far then the subjects of the Spirit's operation, as to have been perhaps in converse, and even occasionally in desirous and delighted converse with Him; but they have not given themselves up to His authoritative voice. They have been so far enlightened by Him, yet not led by Him. The man who through all the strugglings of remorse, at last gives way to the power of a temptation, has had light enough to forewarn him of sin, and light enough after it hath been committed to reprove himself and that most bitterly because of sin—and yet not power enough for the warfare of a successful resistance, so as not merely to feel what is right but to follow it. He therefore in this instance hath not mortified the deeds of his body; and if such be his habit he liveth after the flesh and he shall die. It is not they who mourn over the sin, that is practically and permanently indulged in; but it is they who mortify the sin that are led by the Spirit: And it is by this, as the consecutive tie which binds the last verse to the present one, that the reason is explained why they who mortify the deeds of the body shall live. They who do so are led by the Spirit; and they who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God,—the heirs therefore

of what their Father hath to bestow which is life everlasting.

The Scriptures often affirm a harmony between two positions, which the first and natural apprehensions of men would lead them to regard as opposed the one to the other. We are the children of God says the Apostle by the faith that is in Christ Jesus. He is my brother and my sister says Christ Himself, who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. It is through the redemption of the gospel, wherein we obtain a part and interest by believing, that, as Paul says in his Epistle to to the Galatians, we receive the adoption of sons. It is when through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, that we are led by the Spirit; and, as he says in his Epistle to the Romans, are the sons of God. You will not be disturbed by the utterance of these propositions as if they were contradictory. You know in the first instance, that it is by faith, as by the hand of the mind, that you accept of the offered reconciliation. You know, in the second instance, that it is by the hearing of faith, and not by the works of the law, that the Spirit cometh. You know in the third instance, that the Spirit which so cometh is a Spirit of might and good-will for all holy obedience—so that through Him you are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body. And this last is not the cause why you are led by the Spirit of God, but the proof that you actually are led by Him—a proof which, if wanting, might still argue you to be in possession of His ordinary, but not in possession of His sanctifying, and therefore most assuredly not of His saving influences;—but

a proof which having, is to you the best evidence that you are led by the Spirit, and have therefore received from God the seal of being one of His children.

When you adopt one as a son, it is because you design for him an inheritance; and one can conceive something to be given as the token or the acknowledgment of his acquired right thereunto. In the act of hiring a servant, there is often a pledge given by the master; and this assures to the hireling his title to enter at the specified time upon his employment. Now by one being adopted as a son of God, there is the destination for him of a very splendid inheritance—even one of eternal glory in the heavens. But this is only entered upon at the term of death; and meanwhile, previous to that, there is a pledge or a token bestowed upon him, and this is the Spirit of God which is styled by the way of eminence the promise of the Father, and which, agreeably to the explanation which we have now given, is also termed the earnest of our inheritance. This is that grace in time, which is both the pledge and the preparation of glory in eternity; and the best evidence of which is, that, enabled to mortify all those evil desires which would thwart the purposes of a holy obedience, you are thereby enabled to keep the commandments.

But there is a certain style of keeping the commandments, which we fear is not indicative of this grace. It may be done in a scrupulous, fearful, and painstaking way, by one who is under the workings of a natural conscience, and perhaps a terror of everlasting damnation. In this too it is

possible, that there may be a certain measure of success—the avoidance of much gross and presumptuous sin, that might else have been indulged in—the penance of many sore and strenuous mortifications, so as that the body shall by starved, and in a good degree subjected, by the mere force as it were of a dogged and stiff determination; and so a kind of resolute sullenness in the whole aspect of the man's obedience, which certainly is of a different cast, and has upon it a wholly different complexion, from the gentleness and the grace and the good-will which characterise the services of an affectionate Christian. The truth is, that there might be a self-denial and a self-infliction which come through constraint—a drudgery which is rendered at the stern bidding of authority—a reluctant compliance to appease the dread or the troublesome remonstrances of the inner man—Which fall altogether short,—nay are altogether opposite to the temper of those, who mortify the deeds of the body but do it through the Spirit. What is done is done in their own spirit, which is the spirit of bondage; and not in that Spirit which cometh from above, and whereby we are made both to love the service and Him who enjoins it—to look upon God not as a taskmaster but as a friend, and so to execute His bidding with the alacrity of those whose meat and whose drink it is to do His will—to keep the commandments, not in the spirit of bondage which is unto fear, but in the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.

Ver. 15. 'For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received

the spirit of adoption, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father.'

Had it been under a slavish terror that the work of mortification was gone into, this would have been no evidence of our filial relationship to God. It would have been the obedience of those that were lorded over, and not of those who were led as by the cords of love, as by the bands of a man. Henceforth ye are not servants or slaves, says Christ to His disciples, but ye are sons; and, conformably to this, the spirit of sons is given unto them. And he appeals to the kind of spirit as being an argument for their being the sons of God—a spirit altogether diverse from that by which many are visited, under their first conviction of sin and of the soul and of eternity; who are pierced, as by an arrow sticking fast, with an agonising sense of their own guilt and of God's uncompromising authority; who are burdened under a feeling that the displeasure of Heaven is upon them; and whose consciences all awake to the horrors of wrath and condemnation, never ceases to haunt them with the thought, that, unless they can make good their escape from their present condition, they are undone. Now, to make this good, they will set up a thousand reformations; they will abandon all their wonted fellowships of iniquity; they will strenuously, and in the face of every temptation, adhere to all the honesties and sobrieties of human conduct; they will betake themselves to a life of punctuality and prayer; and moreover graft upon their former habit the rigours of devoteeship, the austerities and the forms of Sabbath observation. Thus it is that they

will seek for rest, but they will find none. The law will rise in its demands as they rise in their endeavours, and still keep a-head, with a kind of overmatching superiority to all their fruitless and fatiguing efforts of obedience. They will labour as in the very fire and not be satisfied; and all their vain attempts to reach the heights of perfection, and so to quell the remonstrances of a challenging and not yet appeased commandment, will be like the laborious ascent of him, who, after having so wasted his strength that he can do no more, finds that a precipice still remains to be overcome —a mountain brow that scorns his enterprise, and threatens to overwhelm him. This has been the sad history of many a weary month, with some on whom the terrors of the Lord have fallen heavy— God having looked at them, as He did upon the Egyptians from a cloud and troubled their spirits —giving them no rest, till they fall back again perhaps into the lethargy of despair, and take up with this world anew as their portion because they have failed in their attempts to secure a portion in the next world—Or, if He had a purpose of mercy, in this sore visitation of darkness and tempest and wrath, at length leading them to the alone Rock of confidence; and endearing the Physician still more to their breasts, that they have been made to feel the disease in all its severity and all its wretchedness.

Now this spirit of bondage, which is unto fear, can only be exchanged for the spirit of adoption, by our believing the gospel. Every legal attempt to extricate ourselves from the misery of the former

spirit, will only aggravate it the more; and we know of no other expedient, by which the transition can be made, than simply by our putting faith in the testimony of the Son of God. We have laboured in vain to seek a righteousness of our own, wherewithal we might stand acceptably before God, because this is the wrong way of it. It is true that He will not look upon us without a righteousness, on the consideration of which it is, that He deems it consistent with the honour of His government and the integrity of His character to take us into favour. But never, and on this point the gospel will enter into no compact whatever with the presumption of weak and guilty man, never will the act of friendship be firm and steady between him and his offended Lawgiver, in consideration of any righteousness of ours. And the distinct proposition is, that we shall look unto Christ as the alone ground of our acceptance before Him, unto His propitiation as that on which our hopes of pardon do rest, and unto His obedience in our stead and for our sakes as that on which we look for the rewards of eternity. Could I state the thing more explicitly I would. It is in the form of bare and unqualified statement that the Bible lays it down; and all who give credence thereunto will find, that in no one instance will they ever be disappointed. It is this in fact which forms the grand characteristic peculiarity of our dispensation; it is the burden of those good tidings which constitute the gospel, and which operated instantaneously as tidings of great joy—because they were no sooner announced in some cases than they were credited—no

sooner revealed than they were relied upon. This is the one and the direct stepping-stone by which you may enter even now into rest. The merit which you laboured to possess is already acquired; and what you seek to deserve is held out unto you in the shape of a free donation. There is a perfect righteousness already brought in, and you need not therefore go about to establish one. It will indeed be going about, if you try to establish a righteousness of your own. Many a fruitless round will you have to ply—many a vain and weary circuit to accomplish; and after all be no nearer to your object than at the point from which you departed—many a laborious drudgery, which will be nought but a laborious deviation from that plain and unerring path, by which, with a majestic simplicity that is stamped upon all His processes, the wisdom of God would conduct you unto Himself. For this purpose, hath He set forth Christ unto you; and He bids you enter through Him into full repose and reconciliation—accrediting the testimony that regardeth His blood, and thus will you be washed from guilt—accrediting the testimony that regardeth His services in your room, and thus will you be sustained by God as the rightful heirs of a purchased and glorious immortality. Submit yourselves therefore unto this righteousness of God. Be assured that it is the grand specific for your case as a sinner; and that you will never, but upon this, get solid or legitimate rest to the sole of your foot. Your acceptance of Christ as He is offered to you in the gospel, is the turning point of your salvation. 'He is freely offered; and never

will you cease to be haunted by the disquietudes of a heart that is not at ease—never will the jealousies of the legal temper be done away—never will you attempt an act of fellowship with God, without the flaw of some guilty and misgiving suspicion adhering to it—never will you know what it is to draw near in the freedom of perfect confidence, with every topic of disturbance and distrust hushed into oblivion betwixt you—Till taking up with Him on His own terms, you alike cast the pride and the pain of self-righteousness away, and become the children of God through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

I fear, that there are many here present, who could never allege of themselves at any time, that they had the spirit of adoption—with whom the sense of God as their reconciled Father, is as entirely a stranger to their heart as is any mystic inspiration—who have a kind of decent, and in some sort an earnest religiousness, but have never been visited by any feeling half so sanguine or extatic as this; and who perhaps may be interested to know, by the footsteps of what distinct or intelligible process, they could come to that filial affection unto God, wherewith as yet they have had no familiarity whatever. I would therefore say, in the first place, that I know of no more direct expedient for arriving at this end, than that of giving earnest heed unto the word of the testimony. "Hearken diligently unto me," saith God, "and your souls shall live." Your ears are so accustomed to what may be called the mere verbiage of orthodoxy, that, when sounded anew or another time

in your hearing, it stirs up no fresh exercise of the thinking principle. You are so well acquainted with the terms, that you arouse not yourselves to the contemplation of the truths. What you hear now, you have heard again and again; and this deafens, as it were, the whole activity of your understanding—so that whilst you recognise the words of the evangelical system as so many old and oft-repeated common-places, you remain blind to all the important and affecting realities of which these words are nevertheless subtantially the vehicles. In these circumstances, I can give you no likelier advice, than that you should put your minds forth and forward from the words to the things. Be not satisfied with the mere expression and cadence of orthodoxy. Engage, and that closely, steadily, perseveringly, with the matter of the gospel testimony. Think that there has been a movement in heaven towards a sinful world. Think that the express design of this movement, was to recall as many of our alienated race as would, to the joys and communions of that paradise, from which they had been exiled. Think that for its accomplishment every barrier in the way of this return is lifted away; and, more especially, that satisfaction was so rendered to a violated law, as that they who have trampled upon it might be crowned with honour, and yet the law itself be magnified and made honourable. Think that the whole burden of your guilt, and of its full expiation, has been laid upon another; and that all are invited, and you amongst the number, to come by this open way of access, and forthwith enter into peace with God. If, in

lifting up your eyes to this contemplation, you still find that all above you is haze and that all within you is heaviness,—continue to look—continue to give heed even until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your heart; and when this wondrous transaction between heaven and earth at length unfolds itself to your mental eye, in its characters of bounty and truth and tenderness—when the spectacle of God willing, and of God waiting to be gracious, is at length recognised by you—when all that moved His wrath and kept Him at a distance, is seen to be put aside by the work of the great Mediator, and that nothing is left but the exhibition of a mercy now rejoicing in the midst of the other attributes, and pouring a fresh lustre on them all, as it passes onwards to a guilty world through the channels of a consecrated priesthood and an infinite sacrifice—It is when thus enabled to see God disarmed of all His terrors, and instead of the inflexible judge, to behold Him as now reconciled through Christ Jesus—it is when this assurance is made directly to bear upon our spirits from the word of revelation, that the confidence of our adoption enters into our hearts, and we can join the apostle and his converts in crying Abba, Father.

It does not follow, however, because you lift your eyes, that the manifestation is then in readiness, for your first and earliest regards towards it. There may be a cloud which intercepts it from your view; and even after many a wishful look towards that quarter whence you expect the light and the comfort of divine truth to come down upon your soul, may you have to complain that I cannot be

lieve, I cannot discern—neither is Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified before me. One advice of an eminent theologian in these circumstances, and it is a good one, is that though you should have missed the object of which you are in quest a hundred times, still make the other and the other effort; and who knows but that next time you will be met with the very revelation which your soul longeth after? To this advice I would shortly add another. While busy in seeking after the development to your belief of Christ's work—be equally busy in your practice at the doing of Christ's will. Labour, though in the dark. Mortify sin, though in such a spirit of unsettledness as to be almost equivalent to the spirit of bondage. Be diligent in duty, and thus might you pioneer your way to clearness and to comfort in doctrine. Forget not the saying that Christ manifests Himself to those who keep His words; and that they whose eye or whose aim is single shall have their whole body full of light; and that to him that hath, more shall be given; and that he who wills to do the will of God, and proves the sincerity of his will by the vigour of his performances, that he shall be made to know of Christ's doctrine whether it is of God.

LECTURE LIV.

ROMANS, viii, 16.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

We can well imagine the desirousness, wherewith an earnest and aspiring Christian might enter upon the interpretation of this verse. For, at the first view of it, he might think that it so far outstrips his own personal experience, as to leave him utterly behind all legitimate hope of his own personal salvation. He may be honestly conscious to himself, that he hath never felt any such witnessing as the text seems at least to advert to—no secret and preternatural intimation of his being one of God's children—no inward communion going on between the Spirit of God and his own spirit, whereby he might assure himself of that test whereby the apostle and his converts assuredly knew that they were the heirs of coming glory—no whisper of this sort to the ear of the inner man—no feeling of any other principle that was active and astir in his own heart, but the thoughts, and the emotions, and the desires of his own busy and familiar self—And thus, on the perusal of this verse, and of those in St. John where the apostle speaks of the witness in himself, and of his positively knowing that God had taken up His abode and dwelt in him even by the Spirit which He had given him—why there are many, who, from the want of all finding and

participation in this sort of experience, feel themselves thrown at an utter distance from that which ministered the high hopes of immortality to the Christian of the New Testament; and who seek in vain for that inscription on the tablet within, which shone in characters of such bright and legible reflection to the primitive disciples, and assured them of their being indeed sealed unto the day of redemption, of their indeed having the mark imprest upon them of God's own family.

Now the first thing that I would say unto all who are in this state of painful ambiguity, is, that if they can obtain no satisfaction in their enquiry after the tests which they are looking for within, they ought to remember, that these tests are come at in no other way, than by a believing contemplation on their part of certain truths which they should often and habitually be looking to without. Even the Spirit, whose presence and whose inward witness they so vehemently desiderate, cometh by the hearing of faith. It was in the act of listening to the words spoken by Peter, that the Holy Ghost fell upon Cornelius and the members of his household. The word of God is the vehicle upon which this heavenly visitant maketh entrance into the heart; and the very first announcement that He gives of His presence, is by the truths of that word imprest convincingly and feelingly upon the mind. This is the way in which He becometh sensible; and if you look for the Holy Ghost in any other way than through the power of Bible doctrine seen to be real, and felt to be morally touching and impressive, you will have no more success than if you looked for a

spectre or some airy phantom of superstition. And therefore, if you will to realize upon your own person the test by which Paul knew of himself and his disciples that they were the children of God, begin at the beginning. Ere you look for that joy which is one fruit of the Spirit, look to the tidings by which you are made joyful. Ere you look for the peace which is another of His fruits, read the pacific message that came from Heaven to earth; and you will cease from your disquietude, when you know that God hath ceased from His displeasure. Ere you make sure of love being in your hearts towards God, make sure of love being in His heart towards you—for it is only upon your believing sight of that love which looketh down from Heaven, that a responding love will rise back again from the earth. We know not if the shepherds of Bethlehem became spiritual men. It is very likely that they did, and that the Holy Ghost took up His residence within them. But they first heard the voice from the sky, of glory to God in the highest and peace on earth and good-will to men; and, under all the doubts and perplexities of your various cogitations, do we also bid you attend to the import of the same voice—and it is in the attitude of a full outlook on the objects, that you realise upon your own person the work and the consequences of faith. And therefore, in defect of experience, in defect of all feeling or confidence on your part that the Spirit is within you, in utter darkness though you may be on the question whether you are the subjects of grace, gaze upwardly and outwardly on the revealed objects of that eco-

nomy of grace which hath been set up in the view of all—and that, from the uttermost ends of the earth all may look and be saved. Your first business is with the gospel. Your first attention should be to its overtures. They are the approach and the errand and the work of the great Mediator, which have a prior and a preferable claim upon you. What you have done once, you have to do always; and if ever a confidence sprung up in your bosom, when to Christ as a great Saviour, you brought yourself as an empty unfurnished and altogether helpless sinner, this you have to do again and again—this beginning of your confidence you have to hold fast unto the end; and it is by a constant renewal of your affections at the fire of this spiritual altar, that the flame of your spiritual grace can be so upheld as to be at all distinct or discernible.

And even when all discernment of your inward graces is lost, and nothing remains of which you are sensible but a desire after them—when utterly at a stand on the question whether you ever had the Spirit, or whether you have it at this moment still—You have a patent way by which to secure the attainment that your heart is set upon, if it be really so set. If there be nothing within to which you can look with any satisfaction, still you have God above standing forth in the aspect of graciousness, and waiting the applications of human willingness and human want. You have that Being to repair to, who hath pledged His truth to the promise, that He will give the Holy Spirit to them who ask it. When in the chaos and confusion of

the inner man, all appearance of His workmanship hath disappeared, still you can pray; and just as the natural hunger ever recurring stands in need of constant and periodical supplies, so it is of our spiritual necessities. They are not met and conclusively provided for by one effusion of living water from on high. You perhaps have been counting upon a stock in hand—when in fact the style of this spiritual administration, is of grace to help you in the time of need. And the felt time of your need, is the fit time of your application. So that let you at present be as far aback as possible, on the question of your having an unction from the Holy One—there are expedients between you and utter despondency. There is the direct act of faith on the truths of the gospel, by which the Spirit cometh. There is the exercise of prayer, in answer to which the Spirit is abundantly poured upon you.

Now how shall we verify the answer to this prayer? How shall we ascertain that upon us there has been the fulfilment of that promise which is unto faith—even the Holy Ghost who is given to as many as shall believe? In reply to this it is most important to observe, that His work is visible, but His working is not so. It is not of His operation that we are conscious, but of the result of that operation. We do not see the wind, though we see the impulse and the direction which it gives to many sensible things. And neither can we tell of the Spirit's agency on a human soul, though the impression which He hath made upon it may be quite palpable. We do not see Him at work,

though we may see the workmanship that he leaves behind Him. As in vegetation our eye is upon the fruit, and not upon the secrets of that hidden physiology whence all the efflorescence cometh—so, in spiritual husbandry, the eye of our consciousness is upon deeds that are palpably done and desires that are palpably felt, and not upon the primary influence which touches the inner mechanism and originates all its goings. There is much, in that parable, where the kingdom of heaven is likened unto seed thrown into the ground, and which springeth up one knoweth not how; but which still leaves the test unaffected that by its fruit ye shall know it. The Spirit may not be felt in His access to the soul, but His fruits may be recognised in the now holy and heavenly affections of the soul. There is neither a light, nor a voice, nor a felt stirring within, to warn us of His presence; but there may now be a goodness, and a righteousness, and a truth, in the heart which give testimony to His power. It is thus that from certain plain characteristics we may come at the inference that we are the children of God—from distinct and intelligible marks to which we have access without mysticism; and on which apostles have condescended in other parts of the New Testament—"Hereby know we that we know him if we keep his commandments." "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

There is one very obvious way then, in which the Spirit may bear witness with our spirit that we

are the children of God; or in which, according to the translation of many, the Spirit may bear witness to or attest to our spirit that we are God's children. It is He who worketh a work of grace in our souls, and that work may become manifest to our own consciences. We may read the lineaments of our now renovated character; and it may be regarded as an exercise of our own spirit, that by which we become acquainted with the new features or the new characteristics that have been formed upon ourselves. And we may furthermore read in the Bible, what be the Scripture marks of the new creature; and as all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God—this is one way in which a joint testimony may be made out between God's Spirit, and our spirit upon the subject; or in which a communication may be made to pass from the one to the other—so that they both shall concur in one and the same sentence that we are indeed God's children. The part that the Spirit of God hath had in this matter is, that He both graves upon us the lineaments of a living epistle of Christ Jesus, and tells us in the epistle of a written revelation what these lineaments are. The part which our own spirit has is, that, with the eye of consciousness, we read what is in ourselves; and, with the eye of the understanding, we read what is in the book of God's testimony: And upon our perceiving that such as the marks of grace which we find to be within, so are the marks of grace which we observe in the description of that word without that the Spirit hath indited, we arrive at the conclusion that we are born of God.

But what is more, it is the work of the Spirit to make one see more clearly in both of these directions—to open one's eyes both that he might behold the things contained in the Bible with brighter manifestation, and also that he might behold the things which lie deeply and to most undiscoverably hidden within the arcana of their own hearts. In virtue of his clearer outward discernment, he may have a more sure and satisfying belief in the Son of God; and in virtue of his clearer inward discernment, this belief, now more sure and strong, may also become more sensible. There are many natural truths in authentic history, in science, in common life and experience, which you not only believe, but which you know that you believe—so that you can not only say of them that these are truths, but of which you can say I know the firmness and the certainty of my own faith in them. In like manner, a man may both believe in a gospel truth, and which is a distinct thing, may know that he believes it. The Spirit may have so far enlightened him as to the doctrine, that he is quite satisfied as to the truth of it; and may also have so far enlightened him as to the state of his own mind, that he knows the belief or the conviction to be assuredly there. Let him have no doubt upon this point; and, on the single assertion that he who believeth in Christ shall be saved, he may have no doubt of his salvation. If he know himself to be a believer, and also knoweth that every believer shall go to heaven, what more is necessary to assure him of his own destination to an inheritance of glory? He hath data enough for such a conclu-

sion. He hath both the major and the minor proposition for the winding up of an argument, which to him at least is irresistible. Still it is the Spirit which hath furnished him with both. By it he discerns the evidence that there is in the Bible, and by it he discerns the reflection that there is of that evidence in his own heart—so that he not only recognises the Bible to be true, but recognises himself to be a believer in the Bible. The one recognition in fact may be so clear and confident and strong, as to lead instantaneously and forcibly to the other. And thus believing in the Son of God, may he come to have the witness in himself, and assuredly to know that he is one of God's children.

No man can know any thing, or believe any thing, but upon evidence. Yet this evidence may be of such prompt occurrence to him when he goes in quest of it; and it may work its convictions upon the mind so quickly and so powerfully; and with all the rapidity of consciousness might so hasten on the argument—that, as the Bible is true, and he is thoroughly aware of his own belief in it, therefore to him all its promises are sure, and all its glorious prospects are unquestionably in reserve for him: And this sunshine of hope may come so immediately on the back of prayer, or be so lighted up at the view of a scriptural passage, or be so supported by all the regards that he is enabled to throw on his past history or on his present feelings —as not only to assure him of the sufficiency of all these proofs for his personal interest in the gospel, but also that it is the Spirit of God who at the moment hath assembled them in such force and

frequency and radiance around him—Not an intimation from that Spirit either by a voice or a direct impulse, but an intimation rationally gathered from those materials of contemplation which it is the office of the Spirit to set before him—gathered from that written record, to understand which the Holy Ghost hath opened his understanding—gathered from what he knows of his own believing heart, to perceive which the Holy Ghost hath enlightened his conscience—gathered from the retrospect of his bygone experience, for the perusal of which the Holy Ghost hath performed the office that belongs to Him, of bringing all things to his remembrance: And thus through the medium, not of visionary but most significant and substantial proofs, yet proofs brought together in a way that announces the preternatural agency concerned in the representation of them—may the Spirit of God witness to the spirit of man, that he is a child of mercy and that the seal of his redemption is set upon him.

I could not, without making my own doctrine outstrip my own experience, vouch for any other intimation of the Spirit of God, than that which He gives in the act of making the word of God clear unto you, and the state of your own heart clear unto you. From the one you draw what are its promises—from the other what are your own personal characteristics; and the application of the first to the second may conduct to a most legitimate argument, that you personally are one of the saved—and that not a tardy or elaborate argument either, but with an evidence quick and powerful as

the light of intuition. By a single deposition of conscience, for example, I may know that I do indeed hunger and thirst after righteousness; and, by a single glance with the eye of my understanding, I may recognise a Saviour's truth and a Saviour's tenderness in the promise that all who do so shall be filled; and, without the intervention of any lengthened process of reasoning, I may confidently give to this general announcement in the gospel such a specific application to myself, as to carry my own distinct and assured hope of a particular interest therein. Thus there is no whisper by the Spirit, distinct from the testimony of the word. Thus there is no irradiation, but that whereby the mind is enabled to look reflexly and with rational discernment upon itself. And hence there is no conclusion, but what comes immediately and irresistibly out of premises which are clear to me, while they lie hid in deepest obscurity from other men—And all this you will observe with the rapidity of thought—by a flight of steps so few, as to be got over in an instant of time—by a train of considerations strictly logical, while the mind that enjoys and is imprest with all this light is not sensible of any logic—and yet withal by the Spirit of God; for it is He who hath brought the word nigh, and given it weight and significancy to my understanding; and it is He who hath manifested to me the thoughts and intents of my own heart, and evinced some personal characteristic within that is coincident with the promise without; and it is He who sustains me in the work of making a firm and confident application. In all this He

utters no voice. The word of God made plain to my conviction, and His own work upon me made plain to my conscience—these are the vocables, and I do imagine the only vocables, by which He expresses Himself; but enough to furnish any Christian with a reason of the hope that is in him, and, better than articulation itself, to solace and to satisfy the enquiring spirit of its relationship to the family of God.

Mine eye can carry me no farther among these experimental processes—these hidden mysteries of the Christian life—these lofty eminences of grace and of attainment, which, high and inaccessible as they may appear to many who are here present, have nevertheless been reached and realized by believers in this world. And would you like to realize them? Are you convinced that there is much of recorded experience in the Bible, and even much of actual and yet occurring experience among the Christians of the day, which overshoots all that you have ever felt or become familiar with in the intimacies of your own bosom? Would you like personally to taste of this experience, to ascertain and upon your own finding what sort of thing after all it is—Really to have to do with these witnessings of the Spirit—these communications of light and love from the upper sanctuary—these foretastes of a coming blessedness—these ecstacies, that, almost look like so many inspirations of which you read in the lives of the holy, but which belong it would seem to a more elevated region of faith or of fancy than you have yet soared into? We hold it to be no fancy. We deem that such a region

exists, and we also deem that there is a series of firm stepping-stones by which it may be gained. We have already spoken, and at the outset of these remarks, of the direct exercise of faith in the gospel; and we now say, that, up to your faith in the doctrine, let be your diligent following of the duties of the gospel. The manifestations for which you long, are given to those who do the commandments of Christ. You desire to reach the assurance of so bright and joyful an anticipation, as the apostle expresses in our text. It is to be reached by a path of labour, and so he says in another place—"labour with all diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end." It is not by a flight of imagination that you gain the ascents of spiritual experience. It is by the toils and the watchings and the painstakings of a solid obedience. Performance alone will not do it—for performance unsanctified by prayer is a legal and a presumptuous offering. Prayer alone will not do it—for prayer unaccompanied with performance, is an idle or a hypocritical effusion. But prayer and performance together will do it. What looks now a secret and inaccessible thing, will then become familiar—for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. What now looks dark and deep and wholly undiscernible, will then become manifest—for to him that ordereth his conversation aright will God show His covenant. There is a working to establish a righteousness of your own, that will land you in utter disappointment and defeat; but there is also a working which is taken up with a looking unto Christ as the Lord your righteousness, that brings

down upon your soul the illuminations which He is ever ready to bestow on His faithful followers; and which He delights in showering down upon them from His seat of exaltation—as the tokens of His love to all those who evince the sincerity of their love to Him, in the keeping of His commandments.

LECTURE LV.

ROMANS, viii, 17, 18.

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

'And if children, then heirs.' The one implies relationship to God, the other a right of property from Him—differing from the corresponding right in society in this—that for one man to be the heir of another, implies a right to that which the other possesses upon his relinquishing it by death. It is a right in reversion; but which, instead of entering upon at the death of another, he enters upon at his own death. And he is an heir of God, not because at that period he succeeds Him, but because at that period he is admitted by Him into the full enjoyment of Himself—nay into as full a participation as his limited faculties will allow, of the very joys and the very characteristics of the Godhead. He then enters on the glory that is to be revealed, and he is then filled with the whole fulness of God. St. John felt himself unable to enter into the details of what that is which the children of God shall be, but still he could say in the general that we shall be like Him. He knew of himself and of his fellow-disciples that they were the sons of God, and exclaims on the manner of love wherewith God had loved them in that they should

be so called; and then he seems to pass from their relationship as sons of which he spake with present certainty, to their relationship as heirs of which he could only speak distantly and dimly—yet speaks in such a way as makes out a very apposite conception of our property in God; for what can give us a nearer use and enjoyment of the Deity, than we have by actually seeing Him as He is, and so gazing with unexpended delight on all those lovely and venerable graces by which He is irradiated—and, what comes nearer to a communication of Himself unto us or to our having a portion in the Divinity, than our being made like unto Him? It would look too as if the circumstance of our seeing Him led, by a sort of casual or influential energy, to the circumstance of our being assimilated to Him—as if we gathered, by a sort of radiation from His glory, the reflection of a kindred glory upon our own persons—as if His excellencies passed into us when ushered into His visible presence, and became ours by sympathy or ours by transmission. He does not part with His character; but He multiplies His character by the diffusion of it through all the members of the blest household that is above; and they may most significantly be called heirs of God—may be most significantly said to have God for their portion, and God for their inheritance—When not only admitted to the full and immediate sight of Him; but when the efficacy of that sight is to actuate and inspire them with His very affections, is to cover and adorn them with His very moral and spiritual glories.

'Heirs of God.' This phrase brings us to the

same conclusion as that in which we have often been landed, by the consideration of other phrases and other passages of the Bible, in regard to the kind of happiness that is to be enjoyed in heaven. To be filled with the fulness of God, is to have a full view of Him as He is; and not merely a full view of His character, but a full participation of it. This is the inheritance that we have to look forward to. An heir hath something in prospect, and something in reversion; and this is our prospect. There is a glory to the revealed; and of which we shall be admitted as the beholders, and not only the beholders but also the sharers of it. Our eye will be direct on the manifested Godhead; and in the act of looking to Him we shall be made like unto Him. We shall imbibe the very character that we gaze upon; and not only shall we have unspotted moral excellence in full and faultless perfection before us, but we shall have all that inherent delight which springs from the ample possession of it. So that after all, it is not the happiness of sense but mainly and substantially the happiness of sacredness. It is the very kind of happiness wherein God hath dwelt from everlasting; and in which He had supreme and ineffable enjoyment before the world was. It is that happiness to which the viewless Spirit of the Eternal is competent; and which lay profoundly seated in the depths of His incomprehensible nature, ere there was any sensible delight to be tasted or any sensible beauty to gaze upon. He was happy in the contemplation of His own virtues; and this is a happiness that we are made to inherit, when,

admitted into His presence, these virtues stand in illuminated glory before us. And He was happy in the complacent possession of these virtues—in the harmony within to which they ever attune the bosom of their serene and abiding occupation—in the deep and capacious peacefulness, wherewith they pervaded the very essence of the Divinity—in that fulness of joy, whereof purity and righteousness and love are the sole but the sufficient elements. This happiness too we are made to inherit, when the character of God is not only set before us in radiant perspective, but is made ours in real and actual possession—when all His moralities take up their dwelling-place in our own souls, and have over them entire and absolute dominion—when, in the ethereal play of our kind and holy and heavenly affections, we shall have pleasure for evermore—when ours shall be the blessedness that essentially resides in every well-conditioned and well-constituted spirit; and opposed to all that turbulence and misery, which wrath and malice and deceit and the fierceness of unhallowed desire are ever stirring in the heart which they agitate and possess—there will be a well of living water in the soul, the play of a celestial fountain that yields to the feelings a perpetual refreshment; and which, apart from all external gratification, can minister the choicest sweets of elysium from the deep and inward complacencies of rectitude alone. And then there is the sympathy of all this conscious feeling between soul and soul,—there is the diffusion of God's own likeness over all the individuals of Heaven's family—there is the moral radiance

that issues from His throne, and is reflected back again from the countenance of all the worshippers who are around it—there is the law of kindness, that emanates from the central place of glory, and circulates throughout the mighty hosts both of the redeemed and the unfallen—These are the properties of that divine inheritance whereunto we are called—these are the beatitudes to which, as the heirs of God, we are invited to look forward; and though we do believe of the paradise above, that it will be lighted up in material splendour, and have all the hues and graces of material loveliness scattered over it in rich and infinite profusion—yet will it be in the healthful temperament of spirits; in the action of mind upon mind; in the worth, and the beneficence, and the piety, that are inwardly felt by each, and spread abroad in one tide of joyful communication among all—it will be in these that the happiness of immortals shall essentially lie. It will be a moral and a spiritual gladness that shall hold jubilee there; and the high and heaven-born festivities that are there enjoyed will be characteristic, not of a place of sense, but of a place of sacredness.

And this should hold out a lesson to all who are pressing forward to acquire, or who do now entertain the hopes of the gospel. It is a hope which should lead directly unto holiness. The son, who is also heir, receives upon his spirit an impression and a tinge from the nature of his inheritance. If it be an inheritance of wealth—he may now be busied with all the plans, and have entered in some degree upon the habits of expenditure. If it be

the inheritance of an official dignity—he even now rises upward in thought to the measure of the elevation that awaits him. If it be a place of duty, and where eloquence or scholarship or high philosophy be indispensable to the discharge of it—then will he give himself up to the toils of an unseen but busy solitude, to the labours of the midnight oil in the work of preparation. And so if it be a place of holy delights and holy exercises—will there even now be a foretaste of the coming joy, and a preparation for the coming services. The expectants of heaven will even now, be of heavenly character and heavenly conversation. There will be a mortification unto the present, there will be an engrossment with the concerns of the future. The urgencies of sense will be resisted, because they are not the delights of sense which are to constitute the portion of their eternity. The high communions of sacredness will be aspired after, because it is a habitation of sacredness whither they are going. The spirit of holiness that is in them here, will be the earnest to them of a holy inheritance hereafter. They will know themselves to be strangers and pilgrims; and their affections will be kindred with the country to which they travel, and not with the country through which they pass. They will sit loose to this world's cares and this world's pleasures; and thus a patience under all earthly discomforts, and a self-denial to all earthly gratifications, will be to them the discipline that shall at once inspire the hope and qualify for the enjoyment of higher gratifications.

'Joint-heirs with Christ.'—The term son im-

plies only a relationship. The term heir implies something more—a right to something in reversion, and on which we are afterwards to enter. The heir hath a title to the inheritance; and joint-heirs have a joint or common title thereunto. We who believe in Christ have a common title with Christ, to the inheritance that is above. It is a title by us possessed, but by Him purchased. It is called a purchased inheritance, because a price was given for it—a ransom or a redemption-price, whereby the title that we had forfeited is again made up to us—a right that we share along with Him who earned it—and of which it is most material that you should know, that by Him it was altogether bought, and to us it is altogether rendered in the form of a present. There is not a greater stumbling-block in the way of our entrance upon the divine life, than the legal imagination that we often set out with, of making good as our claim that which is freely offered to us as a gratuity. We either never shall be satisfied with the goodness of such a claim, and so be all along haunted by a most oppressive sense of insecurity; or, if we are satisfied, it is only by dishonouring God—by bringing down His law to the measure of our loyalty,—by an affronting comparison between the lofty commandment of Heaven and our unworthy and polluted services. And, accordingly, this is a point on which the gospel will stoop to no compromise whatever with human guilt. It makes you welcome to heaven, but not through the works of righteousness that you have done; and if you persist to make this the footing on which you rest

your hopes of immortality—this it denounces as a presumption on your part which it resents to the uttermost, and for which it has no toleration. You must take the gift of eternal life, if you are to obtain it at all, on the footing of that mercy which hath saved us—and of mercy too, that, not satisfied with giving it as a simple donation, gives it conjoined with all the securities of a title-deed, and of a legal investiture. It is given to you in consideration of a righteousness, and that not your own but the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and you altogether defeat the economy of the gospel, and miss the very spirit which it is designed to impress upon sinners, if you hold not by your hopes of a coming inheritance, on the terms that to you it is freely given, because by Him it has been amply earned.

But though we had no part with Christ in the purchase of that inheritance which belongs jointly to Him and to us, yet there is one thing that is common betwixt us. He alone achieved the purchase. He trode the wine-press alone. And when, He saw that there was none to help, His own arm brought Him salvation. But whilst there is no similarity between Him and us as to the fulfilment of that righteousness by which heaven is purchased, there is a similarity as to the fulfilment of that righteousness by which heaven is prepared for. It was He who reared the pathway of communication between earth and heaven; but He not only reared it, He also walked upon it, and we have to follow His steps. For this purpose He was set forth as an example; and, to make it an applica-

ble and an imitable one, He assumed such a humanity as felt the power of temptation, though He overcame it—as was tried by sufferings, and was actually schooled into perfection thereby—as was exercised by affliction in such a way as to be taught by it, and from it to learn obedience. We have nought but revelation to guide us through the mysteries of a nature that none but He ever realised—yet it was a nature so conformable to ours, as that we could make a study and a copy of it; and, accordingly, we are told by the apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews, that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings—that by the things which He did suffer He learned obedience—that He become qualified by this process of discipline to make our sufferings the instruments of our sanctification, even as His sufferings were the instruments as we are expressly told of His sanctification—that both He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are in this respect one—that from the like contests of trials here, there is the like crown of triumph hereafter—and that He hath not only pointed out this way by describing it before us, but hath been enabled thereby to help us over all its difficulties; for "to him that overcometh" he says "will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne."

'If so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together'—or 'seeing that we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together.' There is this difference you will perceive of import between the two phrases 'if so be that,' and 'seeing

that.' By the former phrase, the present suffering is made the essential condition of our future glory. By the latter phrase, the present suffering is recognised as that which hath actually happened; and the future glory as that in which it will most assuredly terminate. And though we would not say of sufferings in time, that they are indispensable to the triumphs of eternity—yet, certain it is, that the one is often made the stepping-stone to the other. Certain it is, that, in point of fact, they are the instruments of a salutary discipline for the growth and establishment of a believer in holiness. They not only go before our glory in heaven; but it is expressly said that they work out that glory. "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The chastisements of God yield, it is said, the peaceable fruit of righteousness; and they are inflicted for the express purpose of making us partakers of His own holiness. "It is good" for me says the Psalmist "that I have been afflicted." "Ere I was afflicted I went astray." And it is very remarkable that the Saviour who assumed the person, and put on the infirmities, and became subject to the temptations of a man—that He also exemplified the very processes by which humanity is purified and exalted unto a meetness for the celestial habitations—that He, of whom we might well imagine that He had nothing to learn, actually learned obedience by the things which He suffered—that He, of whom no one could think that any imperfection adhered to Him, actually became perfect

through suffering—that He, whose natural manhood was carried forward from infancy in a way analogous to the rest of the species, seems to have grown to His moral and spiritual manhood in the same way, being cradled among the elements of suffering and pain, being tutored in the school of adversity, being tried and at length established in virtue under the lessons of this severe teacher—So becoming in all points, with the single exception of sin, like as we are—not feeling only as we ought to feel, and acting as we ought to act, but learning as we ought to learn.

I have had occasion formerly to explain in your hearing the beneficial efficacy of an afflictive process—how it emptied the heart of an idol that had seduced or withdrawn us too much from God—how it loosened the tie by which man is so often bound to the vanities of a perishable world—how, by rending asunder the connection that there formerly was between our affections and certain earthly objects by which these affections were secularised, it left the soul more clear and unoccupied for the things of God and eternity—how, additionally to all this, it tried our faith and patience, and by the very trial strengthened them the more—how it, in a manner, compelled us upon our resources in heaven, to make up for crosses and deficiencies on earth; and, in so doing, brought us into closer contact and made us have more abundant conversation there—So, in a word, as to confirm our attitude of strangers and pilgrims upon earth; and habituate us to the frame of those, who, looking forward to another resting-place, sit loose to the world and to all its treacherous enjoyments.

And it would greatly lighten the burden of our afflictions, did we but lay our account with them—did we regard them as forming a necessary part of our lot—did we, forewarned of their frequency, stand in the attitude of readiness and were prepared to receive them. It would serve to repress the murmurs of our impatience, and reconcile us to the hardships of life, did we look on life as a journey whose hardships must be traversed; and that they, in fact, were the steps of that laborious ascent which led to the higher scenes of a sinless and unsuffering kingdom. There is nought which aggravates more the painfulness of affliction, than the thought that we have been singled out for calamities which are but rarely exemplified in the world; and one of the most familiar effusions of discontent is—that never was man so beset and tormented and cruelly agonised both by misfortune and injustice, as I have been. To meet this tendency, the apostle makes use of many arguments. He tells us that our afflictions are not rare—"Think not that any strange thing hath happened unto you," and that others experience the same—"There has nought befallen you that is not common to the rest of your brethren in the world," and that it is not so great as might easily be imagined—"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin;" and, lastly, that they are useful in the great work of our spiritual education. Be reconciled therefore and patient. You do not know what others suffer as well as you. The heart knoweth its own bitterness: And each believer hath his own appropriate visitation laid upon him, by the God who chastens because He

loves; and who conforms us to Christ in suffering, because He means that we shall be conformed unto Him in glory.

Ver. 18. 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'

This is a testimony which cometh well from the apostle Paul who was so singularly afflicted in his day; who stood at all times in imminent peril of his life, from the unrelenting enemies of that faith which he so steadfastly adhered to; who, in addition to fightings from without, had fears and forebodings within; and whose spirit, made the subject of constant agitation and turmoil both from his misgivings as to the success of his ministry and from that deep and tender sensibility of conscience which rendered him so alive to his own weakness, was well nigh wearied into utter despondency—so that he longed to depart from the world, and to be with Christ which he deemed far better. Such a testimony from a man of so much experience in the sufferings of life, should be prized by the sufferers of after ages—even as the record of that grace and mercy which were bestowed upon him a sinful persecutor, should be prized by the sinners of all after ages. It is a signal exhibition of the power of faith, proving that with him immortality was somewhat more than a dream—that it was embodied into a practical reality; and had the same substantial influence to console him, in the dark and trying hour of adversity, as the near prospect of deliverance even in this world. The man who frets impatiently, under the little crosses

and disasters of our peaceable day—who abandons himself to despair, when his visions of prosperity on this side of time are scattered by the hand of misfortune into nothing—who feels that all is lost, because the earthly portion upon which he set his heart is lost—who, differently reckoning from Paul, reckons himself an outcast from hope and happiness because of the clouds that sit on this temporary scene—He may try himself by these marks, and learn how little indeed it is that he lives by the power of a coming world—learn how, after all, when his faith is brought to a really practical test, it is found most wofully to fail him—and, more especially learn, how possible it is to have quite the form of sound words, and to have all the notions and phrases of the evangelical system, without being impregnated with that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

LECTURE LVI.

ROMANS, viii, 19—22.

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

VER. 19–21. 'For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

To understand these verses let it first be adverted to, that the term here translated creature signifieth also creation; and so might comprehend all animate and all inanimate things. It is true, that the inanimate are not capable of hope; and this feeling perhaps should not be extended beyond the members of the human family—though, certain it is, that, amongst the inferior tribes of living creatures, there is also, in some partial degree, the same restlessness, the same dissatisfaction with present things, the same desire of things better, and perhaps even the same tendency of wish and expectation towards them, that are so palpably evident of

ourselves and all the fellows of our species. And then of mute and insensible things it holdeth true, that, though they cannot hope, they at least wait a restoration. We cannot ascribe to them, without an effort of poetry or of personification, the posture of looking forward to that day of their coming enlargement, when they shall be emancipated from the distress and imprisonment in which they are now held—But still when we include them in the description of these verses, we commit no greater violence upon the literalities of sober and prosaical truth than is done in other parts of Scripture—when all nature is summoned to an act of attendance upon God—when the voice of praise is heard by the ear of fancy as arising to heaven from the mountains and the forests, and the valleys are made to sing, and the little hills on every side to rejoice—when on the approach of its Maker, the whole creation is represented as vocal—when the fields are called upon to break forth into gladness, and the floods to clap their hands. These all are now waiting such an advent and such a jubilee as this; and there is no great stretch of the imagination, when the apostle affirms that they all now hope for a futurity, at which when it becomes present the Psalmist figures them to rejoice.

The next remark that we shall offer for the elucidation of these verses is, that the middle clause of the 20th verse should be thrown into a parenthesis. The main assertion of this verse is, that the creature was made subject to vanity in hope; and we are told by the way that it was so made subject unwillingly, or without its own consent. It

was not for example by any wilful act of theirs, that animals were made subject to death. There could be no willingness on the part of the ground, in that act of which its curse was one of the consequences. It could be from no fault of the will in nature, that she was visited with that sore distemper, under which she now labours; and whereof she giveth palpable symptom in the volcano, and the earthquake, and the storm, and that general conspiracy of all her elements against which man has to fight and to fatigue himself his whole life long—that he might force out a subsistence, and keep footing through a history that is made up of little better than to drudge and to die.[1] It was not of its own willingness that the creation was thus brought under the power of vanity, but by reason of him who subjected the same. There are some who understand this of the great tempter, who, by seducing man from his obedience, brought death into our world and all its woe. Others understand him who yielded to that temptation, our first parent, at whose fall a universal blight came upon nature and she is now become a wreck of what she was—still lovely in many of her aspects, though in sore dis-

[1] A few of the following passages had been transferred twelve years ago, from the author's MS. Lectures on the Romans to his preparations on Natural Theology, and have since been printed from p. 389 onward of vol. ii of his work on that subject. Nevertheless they are still retained here though in a different connection; and to ourselves at least it is interesting to feel, that the same process of reflection which suits the dimness of nature anterior to the light of Christianity, is alike suitable to our present state, while we yet see through a glass darkly and anterior to the disclosures of our future immortality.

tress—still majestic and venerable, though a venerable ruin—appearing as if out of joint; and giving token by her extended deserts, and the gloom of her unpeopled solitudes, and her wintry frown, and her many fierce and fitful agitations, that some mysterious ailment hath befallen her.

So that the whole passage may be thus paraphrased. The creation is now waiting, as if in the attitude of earnest expectancy, for that era—when, transformed into a new heavens and a new earth, it shall become a suitable habitation for those who are declared and manifested to be the sons of God. For creation, then to be so gloriously restored, has for a time been made subject to vanity not willingly, on the part at least of any who now live, but by reason of him who by his fatal disobedience hath brought it into this bondage—yet is it a bondage that is mingled and alleviated with hope; and that too a warranted hope, because creation shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption: And emancipated from those fetters which now bind and burden and make it impracticable and ungracious, it will come forth in smiles that shall be perennial and immortal, it will yield a grateful compliance to the wishes of its happy inmates, and have in all its operations the beneficent flow and freedom of God's own children.

Having rendered to you a general exposition of this remarkable passage, let us now look a little more narrowly into the separate clauses of it.

'For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.' We have already hinted at the extension of this

clause even to the lower animals, and to mute insensible things. There might be somewhat of personification and fancy in such an application. But there is no fancy in generalising it so far, as to include at least all the members of the great human family. There is a sort of vague undefinable impression, we think, upon all spirits, of some great evolution of the present system under which we live —some looking towards, as well as longing after immortality—some mysterious but yet powerful sense within every heart, of the present as a state of confinement and thraldom; and that yet a day of light and largeness and liberty is coming. We cannot imagine of unbelievers, that they have any very precise or perhaps confident anticipation on the subject, any more than the world at large had of the advent of our Messiah—though a very general expectation was abroad of the approaching arrival of some great personage upon earth. And, in like manner, there is abroad even now the dim and the distant vision of another advent, of a brighter and a blander period that is now obscurely seen or guessed at through the gloom by which humanity is encompassed—a kind of floating anticipation, suggested perhaps by the experimental feeling that there is now the straitness of an oppressed and limited condition; and that we are still among the toils, and the difficulties, and the struggles, of an embryo state of existence. It is altogether worthy of remark, and illustrative of our text, that, in like manner as through the various countries of the world, there is a very wide impression of a primeval condition of virtue and blessedness from which

we have fallen—so there seems a very wide expectation of the species being at length restored to the same health and harmony and loveliness as before. The vision of a golden age at some remote period of antiquity, is not unaccompanied with the vision of a yet splendid and general revival of all things. Even apart from revelation, there floats before the world's eye the brilliant perspective of this earth being at length covered with a righteous and regenerated family. This is a topic on which even philosophy has its fascinating dreams; and there are philanthropists in our day who disown Christianity, yet are urged forward to enterprise by the power and the pleasure of an anticipation so beautiful. They do not think of death. They only think of the moral and political glories of a renovated world, and of these glories as unfading. It is an immortality after all that they are picturing. While they look on that gospel which brought life and immortality to light as a fable—Still they find that the whole capacity of their spirits is not filled, unless they can regale them with the prospect of an immortality of their own. Nothing short of this will satisfy them; and whether you look to those who speculate on the perfectibility of mankind, or those who think in economic theories that they are laying the basis on which might be reared the permanent happiness of nations—you see but the creature spurning at the narrowness of its present condition, and waiting in earnest expectancy for the manifestation of the sons of God.

'For the creature was made subject to vanity.' We have already spoken somewhat of the inanimate

creation—of the curse under which the ground lieth, and the consequent toil to which man is subjected that he might live—of the visible derangement into which nature has been thrown, so that all her elements are impregnated with disease, and often by hurricane or pestilence or sweeping flood become the ministers of desolation. We do not know how much lovelier the face of creation would have stood out to the eye, had not sin entered within its confines. We do not know what tints of sweeter beauty had diversified the landscape, or with what finer notes of melody and peace the purer and fresher atmosphere had been charged. It is not for us to tell the precise amount of deterioration, which the mute and unconscious materialism hath sustained by the fall of Adam. But certain it is, that vanity hath thereby obtained a sad ascendant over every thing that lives on the surface of our lower world. It was by sin that death entered amongst us; and this stamps the character of vanity of vanities on all who are subject to it. Through the whole of life doth man walk in a vain show, and he vexeth himself in vain; and even though it had flowed in one clear and untroubled current of felicity, how surely and how sadly it reacheth its termination. It is this which puts a mockery on all the splendour and stateliness of this world. The grave absorbs all and annihilates all; and as one generation maketh room for another, and the men of the present age are borne off the scene by the men of the age that is to follow, we cannot regard the history of our species, and indeed of all the living tribes that people the surface of this

labouring earth—we cannot regard it in any other light than as a series of abortions. There is so much of the promise of immortality in the high anticipation and heyday of youth—there is so much of the seeming power of immortality in the vigour of established manhood—there is even so much of the character of endurance in the tenacity wherewith age keeps itself rivetted to the pursuits and interests of the world, to its busy schemes, and its eager prosecutions, and its castles of fame or accumulated fortune—clinging, as it does, to these things on the very brink of the sepulchre; and keeping the firmer hold with the hand of avarice, the sooner that its deeds and its documents and its various parchments of security are to be torn away from it—Why the whole picture looks so farcical if I may be allowed the term—that surely it may well be said of life under its happiest guise, and in midst of its greatest prosperity, that it is altogether subject unto vanity.

'Not willingly but by reason of him who hath subjected the same.' This as I said before is a parenthesis, by which the main current of observation is suspended. Yet here it comes most pertinently in. This is a condition which hath passed upon it by the sentence of the Creator, not gone into with the consent of the creature. It is a thing of ordination not of choice. The mute and inanimate things had no choice of that derangement which they have been made to undergo—of that decay under which so many of them, and these the loveliest in nature, do yearly sicken and expire; and so exemplify a death that likens them to those who are immediate-

ly above themselves in the scale of creation. Neither had the inferior animals any voluntary part in that law of mortality whereunto they are subject—or in that law of their sentient or organic nature by which, in obedience to a tyrant appetite, they go forth upon each other in mutual fierceness to raven and to destroy. And even with man it is a thing of destiny, and he comes into the world all unconscious of that which is abiding him. What does an infant know of death? or what does it know of those restless passions by which, ere death ensues, the period that intervenes is a troubled dream of vexation and vanity? They lie unevolved and sleep in mysterious embryo among the curious receptacles of its little bosom. If this subjection of our world unto vanity is resolvable into willingness at all, it must be either the willingness of that great adversary who plied the first and fatal temptation, or it must be the willingness of those first parents who yielded to it. And it is indeed a most striking demonstration of the malignity of sin, and of God's unfaltering hostility against it—that, on its first entrance within the confines of our planet and ever since, Nature took on a hue of sickliness; and the very elements were charged with disease; and even that ground, which erst offered a soft and flowery carpet for the impress of ethereal footsteps, gathered into a more rugged and intractable temper than before; and death established its grim relentless empire over every thing that breathes; and more especially man has been doomed by the very nobleness of his endowments, by the greater reach of his forebodings and

the finer sensibilities that belong to him, to a larger participation, to a higher pre-eminence in the general distress.

'In hope.' Take away the parenthesis and you read 'Vanity in hope'—or an experience of present evil mixed with the anticipation of release from it. In the condition of the accursed angels, there is evil unmixed and unalleviated. We can imagine it, but we do not feel it. We deem that in every clime and with every human creature, there is, it may be dimly and faintly, but there is we think a sort of restless aspiring towards better things, which could not exist without a certain prospect of enlargement. There is a constitutional impulse in the human spirit, by which it is ever stretching forward to a better and a happier condition than the one which it now occupies; and if it can find no earthly prospect on which to rest, still the tendency abides with us; and goads us on as it were to unknown futurity, which we fill with wishes and schemes and fond imaginations, rather than that a faculty within should lie unemployed, or a feeling should continue to actuate our hearts that shall be left without an object to exercise and entertain it. We cannot fancy a situation of greater wretchedness, than that from which hope is excluded, and before which there lies no open vista whatever that admits one ray of light from the fathomless unknown; or rather perhaps when it is all known to be the cheerless infinite of one vast and unknown desolation—when grim certainty informs the conscience, that what the present void and the present agony are now, such will they ever be—when the

weight that is now upon the spirit is surely believed by the owner of it to be irremediably there; and there is ever ringing in his ear, the unvaried knell of a ceaseless and changeless and comfortless eternity. Such may be the sad estate of those apostate spirits that have fallen before us; but it is not ours. The vanity to which we are subject is mingled with hope; and it bears a kind of experimental evidence to that economy under which we live, that the prospects which it sets before us are so adapted to principles which God hath still permitted to remain in our nature. It shows that there is a counterpart within us to the doctrine that is without us. It secures a more ready coalescence on our part with the revelation of immortality. It gives to that revelation the advantage of being met with and responded to, in a way that it could not so promptly and immediately have been, had there not been such an adaptation between the mechanism of our spirits and the matter that is addrest to them. It secures it, that we shall spring forth with more alacrity and desire to that message by which our futurity is unfolded—And however misdirected this tendency of our nature, either on the part of those who have a false mythology and a fabled elysium, or on the part of those who without religion at all have still a philanthropy that urges them forward in pursuit of an earthly elysium that after the lapse of generations they conceive to be waiting our species—still they are better subjects for being plied with the doctrine of a true revelation, than if they had no such tendency.

That there is this tendency, and a strong one too, even without and beyond the limits of Christianity is quite obvious. The very thirst after immortal fame, on the part of orators and philosophers and poets, is an exemplification of it; and so are the magnificent sketches of a prouder and better day for our species, that float before the eye of our sanguine economists; and so is every effort to shake off the trammels of antiquity, and to speed if possible with an innovator's hand, the amelioration of our race; and so are those lovely visions of a world regenerated into benevolence and purity and peace, that certain uninspired prophets love to gaze upon. Each has a millennium of his own on which he doats and dwells with kindred imagination; and whether you read of the future triumphs of virtue by the progress of light, or are called to look upon it in the perspective of planned and regulated villages—put it all down to the craving appetite, or even to the strong expectancy that there is in human bosoms, for some bright and beauteous evolution in the history of human affairs.

There is a prophetic announcement of such an era, or, what is stronger still, a habitual advertence to it, on the part of many prophets and apostles and evangelists. This is a topic on which Christians feel that they have a warrant for very noble and high anticipations. The gospel throws open to the eye of faith a vista, that terminates in a better day of glory and of rejoicing which shall fill the whole earth; and with this peculiarity, which is all its own, that, while it points the eye to this moral scene, it puts into the hand that specific in-

strument by which it is to be realized. It is through the ministry of that by which the world is reconciled, that it shall at length be regenerated. It is on their acceptance of the message of peace, that a purifying influence is to descend from the sanctuary; and, in very proportion as the word of faith circulates and finds admittance with the species, will the work of renovation take effect upon them. And, amid all the ridicule which is incurred by those who put their trust in the operation of a preached gospel, we, at this very day, have witnessed the samples of its efficacy. And surely it is not for us who know the wonders of missionary success; who, within the compass of our own evanescent memory, have seen the transition of a whole people from the grossness of heathenism to the light and love of Christianity—it is not for us to give up as hopeless the cause of this world's amelioration.

Ver. 21. 'Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

Because—is capable from the original language of being rendered into that—in which case the passage would run thus—'For the creature was made subject to vanity, in hope that the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.' —We prefer however the present translation. It is not true that all have the specific hope of a deliverance in the terms of the verse—though all I think have a kind of longing and indefinite hope—a vague anticipation of a better and a higher existence that awaiteth them—a fond imagining of

future bliss—Not confined to the mythologies or the faiths of the old world; but felt even by the Indians of the new,—mixing itself with their feasts and their battles and their war-songs, and descending with something like the power of inspiration upon their hearts. We would not however just say of these wild and untaught children of Nature, that they hoped specifically for the glorious liberty of the children of God—though we should say, that, because such a liberty is awaiting us, therefore there is a general hopefulness of some enlargement or other among all the members of the human family. There is a marvellous adaptation between the truths of the gospel, and the constitutional tendencies of those to whom it is addressed. There are counterparts in revelation, to every feeling and every faculty of nature. There is something in it suited to our fears and our wishes and also to our hopes; and in all that is said of the millennium and the latter-day glory, do we recognise a tallying accordancy with an expectation, which, however it may have originated, is in some shape or other very widely diffused throughout the world.

But let it be your care, my brethren, to have a hope more precise and practical than this—a hope that looks forward to the prospects, and is founded on the promises of the gospel—a hope of enlargement certainly, but such an enlargement as even now it is competent for you at least to enter upon though not fully to expatiate in it. What the liberty is, we may infer from what the bondage is. It is the bondage of corruption from which you are to be delivered; or, in other words, it is the liberty

of a will set free from the tyranny of evil desires into which you are to be translated. It is a moral and spiritual liberty to which you look—a release from the servitude of sin, from the power and the prevalency of those base and earth-born affections which war against the soul. Now let me apprise you, that, to obtain this release, the soul must now put forth all the energy that is in it, and forthwith embark on a war against them. If you permit them to be your tyrants in time, they will be your tormentors throughout eternity. Here the victory will not be complete, but here the battle must be begun; and it is only to him who overcometh in the conflicts of grace, that the crown of glory is given. The hope of the gospel is not that floating and vague and aerial speculation, which is merely addressed to the contemplative faculties, and over which a man may luxuriate in a sort of indolent elysium of the fancy. It is a hope that turns immediately to a practical account; and, if real, will urge forward, and that immediately, in a practical direction. The hope of unspotted holiness in heaven, leads to the toils and the trials and the purifications of holiness upon earth. This is the life on which a man enters, and that in good earnest and in a real spirit of business, on the moment that his mind is taken possession of by a true faith in the gospel. It is when we know the truth that the truth makes us free. It is when we look to the fulness of that propitiation which was made for the sins of the world, and feel how under its blessed operation all sense of guilt and of reckoning is made to disappear from the conscience—it is then that

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we are loosed from the bond of despair, and can see that there is a hope in the new obedience of the gospel. And it is then too that we are visited with trust, when before there was terror—that we are visited with a delight in those ways, to which before there were distaste and antipathy—that we are visited with gratitude to Him, who before was lightly esteemed by us—and that, under the impulse of this gratitude, we enter with alacrity and good-will on that new path, which, by His example and His precepts He hath pointed out to us. You have no part nor lot in these things, if you are not so bestirring yourselves.

Ver. 22. 'For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.'

It may be thought by some that there is a little too much the character of fancy in our previous remarks, for the solid and the simple instruction of those to whom they are addressed. And yet you find that the evangelical Paul, he who was determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, he who gloried to preach the gospel in the face of the oppositions of vain philosophy and of science falsely so called—you find of him that he casts a widely speculative eye over the whole creation, which in this verse he represents as groaning and travailing in pain. It is quite obvious that he here extends the range of his contemplations, beyond the limits of the Christian church properly so called. In the next verse, he expressly singles out believers, whom he represents also as in the agony of a yet unfulfilled expectation. Not only they—that is Nature at large—not only they

but we who have the first-fruits of the Spirit do groan inwardly. So that in this the present verse, he is indulging himself with a very ample perspective—he is taking a distant outlook beyond the precincts of the consecrated territory—he is roaming abroad, as it were, and with generalised survey over the whole expanse of animate and inanimate things—he counts not this passing, but sublime and comprehensive regard, unworthy of a place in the page of inspiration. And accordingly, set and shrined as it were in an epistle the most replete of them all with the very strictest peculiarities of the theological creed, do you find an image more striking I am sure and more descriptive of a universal character, that takes in the whole compass of nature in all its varieties, than any which I have ventured to bring forward—the creation in a state of big and general distress, giving token of some pregnant but yet undisclosed mystery wherewith it is charged, and heaving throughout all its borders with the pains and the portents of its coming regeneration.

This is the aspect which our present system of things bore to the eyes of the apostle, and its aspect still. The world is not at ease. The element in which it floats is far from being of a tranquil or a rejoicing character. It has somehow gone out of adjustment; and is evidently off the poise or the balance of those equable movements, in which we should desire that it persisted for ever. Like the stray member of a serene and blissful family, it has turned into a wayward comfortless ill-conditioned thing, that still teems however with the recollection

of its high original, and wildly gleams and gladdens in the hope of its future restoration. It hath all the character now of being in a transition state; and with all those symptoms of restlessness about it which brooding insect undergoes, ere it pass into the death-like chrysalis, and come forth again in some gay and beauteous expansion on the fields of our illumined atmosphere. Meanwhile it is in sore labour; and the tempest's sigh, and the meteor's flash, and not more the elemental war than the conflict and the agony that are upon all spirits—the vexing care, and the heated enterprise, and the fierce emulation, and the battle-cry both that rings among the inferior tribes throughout the amplitudes of unpeopled nature and that breaks as loudly upon the ear from the shock of civilized men—above every thing the death, the sweeping irresistible death, which makes such havoc among all the ranks of animated nature, and carries off as with a flood its successive generations—These are the now overhanging evils of a world that has departed from its God.

LECTURE LVII.

ROMANS, viii, 23—25.

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

VER. 23. 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.'

It is the turn of expression here, the introduction of 'even we ourselves'—as additional to and apart from all that he had asserted before, in regard to the intense and even painful expectancy of nature for its coming enlargement—it is this which, more than any other, convinces us of the amplitude that there is in the apostle's contemplations; and we are satisfied that we only follow in his track, when we affirm of creation at large, the agony and the suspense and the brooding anticipations that we have ascribed to the general species, and have even extended in some sense to the irrational creatures, nay to mute and inanimate things. The apostle seems to pass from this wider speculation to the present state of his own limited society—to draw himself in as it were from the world to the church whom he represents as in like manner labouring. Even with them too, there is a present draw-back

from that full and final blessedness that awaits them—there is hope far more specific and sure, than that which floats and dazzles so indistinctly upon the vague imagination of those who are without; but still it is a hope subject to the deduction while they remain in the world of a remaining vanity—there is an evident composition of two ingredients, one of them the Spirit whereof they have received already the first-fruits, but the other of them a vile body that is still in a bondage from which it has not yet been fully redeemed or emancipated—Insomuch that, under a sense of its thwarting and oppressive presence, there is the feeling, and even the exclamation of a sore agony. The reader will not fail to recognise in this passage, the very lamentation that is uttered elsewhere "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" "Our life at present is hid with Christ in God, and when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened—not for that we would be unclothed but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." It is when thus clothed upon that "our vile bodies are changed and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ."

These passages all harmonise, in the account they give of the present state of believers in our

world. In spite of the enlargement they have gotten, it is still a state of durance. They have not yet had the Spirit without measure, but only the first-fruits of it. They have not yet been delivered from the presence of an evil nature. It is only overruled, not exterminated. It is only under watch and under warfare—yet not stript of its power to fatigue and to annoy. The life of a Christian differs as much from that of another man—as the smart of the wounds that are inflicted in a battle for freedom, differs from the smart of the wounds that are inflicted upon captives or slaves by the lash of an overseer. But then it also differs as much from that which it will be—as the strenuousness and hazard and agony of the day of conflict, differ from the rest that is enjoyed, and the triumphs which are felt, and the music that is lifted up, and the smiles of gratulation and high contentment that are exchanged from one happy countenance to another, on the day of victory. There is no respite from the warfare on this side of death. A larger supply and manifestation of God's Spirit will not even secure it to us—for while it arms with new power against the enemy within, it also endues us with new and powerful sensibility to the now diminished but still more hated remainders of evil than before. So that the final release will not be enjoyed till death, and even then perhaps it will amount to little more than rest from our labours. The final triumph will not be till the resurrection, when the body shall again be called forth from the tenement in which it long hath mouldered; and the corrupt principle shall by the mysterious transfor-

mation of the grave be fully disengaged from it; and that framework, every vestige of which was before obliterated, shall put on its ancient form, but be thoroughly freed of that moral virus which now so thoroughly and so intimately pervades it; and its reappearance from the land of its present captivity will indeed be to it a redemption of joy—achieved by Him, who, in giving up His own body, gave up the price of their glorious immortality in behalf of all who believe on Him.

You perceive how it is, by the very nature of the case, that there can be no deliverance to the Christian from the agony of a conflict, and from a sense of soreness and heaviness and discomfort, on this side of death. For there passeth no such transformation upon his body, as to change it from the state and character of being a vile body—for it so remaineth till the departure of the last breath from it. The whole of what the New Testament describes as the old man, or the carnal man, is alive even unto the moment of our earthly dissolution—enfeebled, no doubt, by the habit of frequent thwarting and mortification to which it hath been subjected—kept more effectually under, in proportion to the growth and energy of the rival principle, that is fostered by prayer, and strengthened by exercise, and placed after every new victory on the vantage-ground of a higher ascendancy than before over all the rebellious appetites of our ungodly and accursed nature. Yet, in spite of all this prosperity, there is a felt annoyance; and to which the mind becomes more painfully and sensibly alive, as it advances into a meetness for the inheritance of the

saints. For if a disciple be making genuine progress—Then, along with the triumph of this which bears him up on the one hand, there is a tenderness that keeps him down on the other; and that because of the remaining evil which still lurks and lingers in his moral constitution, less than before but better seen than before—of a milder taint, but now looked at with a purer eye, now reflected on with a deeper humiliation. And thus a burden upon his spirit which the world cannot sympathise with; and a deeper groaning within, even while to all without the graces of his character are brightening into a more vivid lustre than before—a greater annoyance from one quarter, along with a greater hope and satisfaction from another, and that because his self-acquaintance is growing, and his sensibility is growing: And thus it is that he longs more earnestly as he proceeds, for the entire repose of perfect godliness and purity and love—for a thorough extinction from his moral system of all that evil by which it is still pervaded, and is the more offensive to him just as he becomes more ethereal and heavenly than before—for a final relief from the last dregs of that vitiated nature, which still hangs about him and troubles him with its hateful presence—Insomuch that the purest and the saintliest of men have been known to weep upon their death-bed, for that still adhering corruption which they felt to be most dishonouring to God, and most disquieting to their own souls.

Such being the state of matters, Christians have not yet come to the inheritance of perfect virtue. They are only waiting for it. They now bend for-

ward in the attitude of expectants. They have already got the first-fruits of the Spirit; and this serves at least as an earnest. But they are far from thinking that they have yet attained. St. Paul thought so much otherwise, that he counted his acquisitions to be as yet nothing; and such is the infinite distance between a saint on earth and a saint in heaven, that the former, so far from having any adequate share of the perfection and the glory to which the latter is elevated; has not even an adequate imagination of them. He sees it, but by a medium of such exceeding dimness, that he is said to see it through a glass darkly. He knows himself to be one of the children of God; but he knows not yet what he shall be—what the whole amount of blessedness and of perfection is which belongs to that exalted relationship, and to which when he is preferred, he receiveth what may substantially and in the full significancy of the term be called his adoption. It is then that the most signal mark of this relation to God is conferred upon him; and this is what in the text he is represented as now waiting for. This adoption is followed up by a short explanatory clause, which maketh known what it is that it consists in—to wit—the redemption of the body. It is brought back from the land of its captivity. It is called forth again out of the grave into which it had entered, where it perhaps ages before had been deposited as a natural body, but whence it now ariseth a spiritual body. And the redemption which it then undergoes is an everlasting redemption. Death will no more have the dominion over it. It will become immortal; but this

is not the whole of its coming glory. It will also be immaculate. It will furnish no element to thwart or to impede the movements of a righteous spirit; and by which it is that the whole man of a believer upon earth is kept in a state of controversy. From its then regenerated mould there shall have been ejected, and that conclusively, both the seeds of mortality and the seeds of moral evil. The death which our first parent entailed, and the corruption which he entailed, shall be alike put forth of that materialism wherewith the spirit of man is forthwith to be encompassed, and in which he is to be equipped for the services of eternity. It is saying much for what that is which essentially constitutes heaven, when it is said here to consist in the redemption of the body. It is in truth the jar, and the dissonance, and the maladjustment with all that a righteous spirit aspires after in the way of moral excellence—it is this which now distempers our world; and it is this, aggravated and universal, which will give its fiercest agonies to the accursed in the place of condemnation. And, on the other hand, it is a total exemption from the carnal and the corrupt ingredient—it is the harmony of a system of all whose parts are in unison, and all on the side of purest virtue—it is the scope that will then be for the doings and the desires of holiness, when the body shall lay no weight as now upon the willingness of the spirit—This is the redemption for which believers are waiting here, and the hope of which upholds them in their struggle with all the perversities of our earthly nature—it is this of which they have now the dim and distant perspec-

tive, and which when realised will constitute the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Ver. 24, 25. 'For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.'

In the whole of this passage, it seems the drift of the apostle to reconcile those whom he addresses to their present sufferings—and that not merely to the persecutions which they had to sustain from without, but to the perplexities and spiritual misgivings whereby they were agitated within; and the main cause of which, in the aspiring bosom of every honest Christian, is a sense of his own exceeding shortness from the high standard of gospel obedience. What he desiderates and longs after, is to be saved from the deadness and carnality of his own earthly nature; and the apostle meets this anxiety, by telling him that the actual economy of salvation is not so constituted, as to bring to those who are its objects the fulness of an immediate possession, but as to hold this out to them as a thing in reserve—as a thing in distant anticipation. We are saved by, or rather we are saved in hope. Christians in this world are maintained in a sort of analogy to the general state of the world, which has already been affirmed as a mixture between present vanity and future expectation. If we look for a full and finished salvation now, we look for that which the gospel gives us no warrant to count upon. The condition in which it places us here is one of expectancy, and not of attainment. The salvation that

it hath brought is not one which we have now, but one which we hope to have afterwards. We are in the wrong if we give way to heaviness, because we are not yet fully inducted into the spiritual privileges and immunities of heaven. It is not so arranged by Him who had the ordering of this whole administration of grace. By the very constitution of it, what we aspire after, and are in heaviness because we have not yet reached, is ours only in prospect and not in possession. This ought to satisfy our disquietudes. It is an argument for patience. The dispensation under which we sit is not one of sight but one of hope. This hope is the essential characteristic of it, which would in fact be expunged were the full and finished reward a thing of presence and not a thing of futurity. It would cease to be a matter of hope if it were a matter of vision—for hope that is seen is not hope, for what we see we do not hope for—what is in possession is no longer in prospect. Seeing then that such is the economy of the gospel, that it is so framed as to place its consummation not beside us but in a distant futurity before us, let us conform ourselves thereunto—let us sit down and be satisfied with hope instead of perfect happiness in the meantime—let us wait for the coming glory and wait for it with patience.

But though the phrase admits of the translation that we are saved *in* hope, intimating thereby the simple truth that salvation is in the main a thing of expectancy while we live in the world—yet though we should adhere to the present translation of our being saved *by* hope, and thereby ascribe to

this principle a kind of efficacy in bringing about our salvation, we should not on that account traverse any of those principles that are unfolded in the New Testament. There is indeed a very close alliance stated throughout the evangelical writings, between the hope of a Christian and his salvation. There is a hope that is instantly awakened by the faith of the gospel; and it is often reiterated upon us that by faith we are saved. I cannot conceive a man really to believe even in the general announcements of the gospel, without appropriating to himself the comfort wherewith they are charged, and which is addressed unto all—for while addressed unto all they are at the same time, as I have often affirmed, pointed specifically unto each: Nor can I think of any honest enquirer after salvation, that he shall read believingly such a statement as that "whosoever cometh unto Christ shall not be cast out," or such an invitation as "Come unto me, all ye who weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," or such a widely sounding call as "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved,"—I cannot think of faith in any of these apart from the hope the individual hope and trust they are fitted to awaken—so that the affirmation of being saved by hope is about tantamount to the saying that by faith you are justified. But this of being justified is far from being the whole of salvation. The term includes a great deal more than our being saved from wrath; it signifies further our being saved from the power of sin—as in that passage where it is said that we are saved by the washing of regoneration, and the renewing of the

Holy Ghost. And that we are so saved by hope, that by this principle we are sanctified as well as justified, is directly affirmed by St. John—when he tells us that "he who hath the hope of seeing God and being like unto God purifieth himself even as God is pure."

To understand how it is that hope should operate in this way, we have just to reflect what that really is to which a genuine believer looketh forward. It is not to a paradise of sensuality, else he might revel as nature would incline him among its delights and gratifications. It is to a paradise of sacredness; and we hold it morally impossible that a man should dwell with fond anticipation on such a destiny, without a taste and temper of sacredness. The man who prefers what is earthly to what is heavenly, will turn away his face from the better country, and from the road that leads to it; and in reference to it there will be no belief, no hope, no kindred aspiration. With such a preference he withholds all attention as well as all desire from the futurities of another world; and, wholly immersed in the cares or joys of the present one, he lives without faith, and he dies with the burden of this condemnation upon him that "he loved the darkness rather than the light, because his deeds were evil." It has been defined of hope that it is a compound of desire and expectation; and no man can desire such a heaven as that which is represented in the New Testament, without the work of holiness being begun in him. Were it merely a heaven of animal enjoyments, or a heaven that rang with melody, or a heaven that was lighted up

with variegated splendours, or even a heaven of science where the understanding was feasted with truth even unto extacy—then one might have the hope of such a heaven without being moralised by it. But when it is a heaven whose essential characteristic is that it is a place of holiness, when it is a heaven defined in the book of Psalms as the land of uprightness, and described in the book of Revelation as that eternal city where the servants of God do serve Him—then it is not in truth or in nature, that one should look forward with complacency to his entrance upon such a heaven, without a growing conformity in his character here to that which he believes and rejoices to believe shall be his condition hereafter. He cannot look with pleased expectancy to such a place, without gathering the radiance of its virtues upon his soul; and if, amid the crosses and fatigues of a treacherous world, this be habitually the hope by which he is sustained—then, as surely as by any law of his moral or sentient constitution, this also is the hope by which he will be sanctified.

Before quitting this subject, let me simply advert to a cause, that serves very much to aggravate the struggle of a Christian here below, and to expose him to a still more acute sense than he might otherwise have had, of that deadness and deficiency from the spiritual life, under which even Paul and his converts are represented as groaning inwardly. What I allude to, though perhaps it looks like an excrescence from the main subject of these remarks to allude to it at all, is the way in which an aspiring Christian must be weighed down, as to all his

holy and heaven-born tendencies—by the engrossments of business—by the multitude of hours that he consumes every day among the attentions and labours of a pursuit, along which he never meets with any one of the influences of sacredness—by the exhaustion in which this lands him on each recurring evening—and by the call that he feels to lie upon him, of giving the first and earliest vigour of his necessary repose to the very toils, that so spent and secularised him yesterday. To a man who has been visited with any unction upon his soul from the upper sanctuary, I cannot figure a heavier burden or a sorer discomfort than this; and just as we have thought it right occasionally, even from the pulpit, to protest against the keen and busy and almost gambling adventure of an overtrading age—so would we protest against that total absorption of spirit, that overwhelming load upon all its faculties, that utter alienation from better things, which must ever accrue from an undue and overdriven employment. The two evils work in fact to one another's hands. The man who trades beyond the compass of his means, gives himself more to do than he can well overtake; and so has to labour at the desk of his counting-house, or to bustle among markets, or to run to and fro among customers and correspondents at a distance, beyond the compass of his time or his physical strength—and so, in the neglect of all spiritual cultivation, his heart becomes a wilderness, and his family ceases to profit by his instructions or his example, and Christianity goes to utter waste on a mind thus overrun with the cares and the keen ambitions

of a perishable world, and the good seed of the word of God is choked and overborne—And all from what? from the temptation that he has given way to of extending, and that to undue dimensions, a business that, within safe and moderate limits, might have yielded him a quiet and comfortable passage through this land of vanity. There never was so cruel a sacrifice as this—of all the snugness and tranquillity that he might have perpetuated, in the character of a thriving well-conditioned, though withal perhaps a plain and unambitious citizen—had he only not adventured himself on the high and slippery places of daring speculation; and given up his domestic evenings, and his unbroken Sabbaths, and the perennial contentment that used to flow within his bosom, and his simple gratifications, and all the quiet opportunities that within the shelter of an humbler but happier sphere he would have enjoyed for communion with a present God and the preparations for a future eternity. Be assured, that there is a limit which ought to be laid on the number and extent of the services, that are rendered to the great divinity of the place. The commerce of the world cannot be pushed beyond a certain barrier; and the share that each individual takes of it cannot be so pushed either without the ruin of his fortune, or at all events, the utter ruin of a mind wholly given over to a most deceiving and a most dangerous idolatry.—Take pity on yourselves. Take pity on your clerks and journeymen and apprentices. Offer not the encroachment of one moment upon their Sabbaths; and even be careful through the week,

lest they be drudged and worn out of all energy for a far nobler service and a far higher interest than your own. There is nought for which I more admire the Bible, than the experimental sagacity wherewith it pronounces on all the habits and temptations and characteristics of human life in each of its varieties—a sagacity that might still be recognised even in modern days; and though the apostle had lived in our city, and spent years in the capacity of a student or a spectator on the exhibitions of our nature that he found in it, he could not have more happily described the wretchedness and the folly of extreme mercantile ambition, than in this passage to Timothy—"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil—which while some have coveted after they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

LECTURE LVIII.

ROMANS, viii, 26, 27.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

VER. 26. 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

It would appear from the first clause of this verse, that the great subject of labour and sore anxiety to Christians, and under which they groan inwardly, is their deficiency from holiness; and the great subject of their hope, is the perfect holiness that awaits them in heaven. But, additionally to this expectation of the future, the apostle also tells us here that there is partly a deliverance at present—a foretaste of that which they are looking forward to; and from the nature of the foretaste, we may infer the nature of the anticipation. Now the benefit that they have in possession is help against their infirmities; and so the benefit which they have in prospect is that these infirmities shall be utterly and conclusively done away. In other words it is a moral enlargement on which the truly renovated Christian hath set his affections

and his hopes. They are the glories of perfect virtue after which he aspires. It is the fulness of the image and character of the Godhead, that form the triumph and the rejoicing of the blest in eternity. It is an emancipation from the present carnality; and the present corruptness; and the weight of present low and earthly affections into love and light and liberty, while they gaze directly on the excellence of God and reflect that excellence back again from their own character—This is the true heaven which they have in prospect, and for which they have already set themselves out in busy preparation—a preparation therefore of holiness, the only preparation that can fit them for joining in the services or the joys of the upper sanctuary, the only one that can make them meet for the inheritance of the saints.

But, meanwhile, they have somewhat more than a future hope—they have a present help; and it is worthy of remark that they are not delivered from their infirmities, they are only helped against them. The burden of them, it would appear, is not lifted off. But strength is afforded that they may be able to bear it. The pressure still exists; but there is an adequate power of resistance given, by which it is effectually withstood. Nevertheless it is a pressure, a felt and a grievous pressure, under which they groan—even as a strong man might do under a burden, though able with much pain and fatigue to carry it. It is just so with the Christian. He is still weary and heavy laden; and in this respect he differs from a saint in heaven. But his sins, which so weary and so overload him, are

not cherished by him as his enjoyments—they are hated and denied and striven against, as his deadly enemies; and in this respect he differs from an unrenovated man upon earth. His state in fact is a state of composition. His life is a life of conflict. There is war in his soul. The vile body aspires to the mastery by its instigations. The mind seeks to retain the ascendant against it; and God's Spirit is sent to help it in its purposes. There will be repose at length, but not here. The battle will not be terminated on this side of death. But reinforcements of strength will be daily sent to keep up the combat—by sustaining that one party, which, but for them, would have surrendered. So that though the soul is not defeated, it is kept in the busy turmoil of a sore warfare—it is often cast down though not destroyed.

'For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.' We are convinced that many feel a general undirected desire to be right—a kind of vague though vivid earnestness—an indefinite longing after God and goodness—a sort of looking towards Zion and preference for heavenly things—who at the same time are unable to rest upon aught that is specific or satisfying. They have the sense of not being as they should be—an indistinct yet strong impression of helplessness—the assurance, though not a very specific or luminous one, that there is a way of passing into a state of rest and a state of enlargement, could they only but find it out and practically enter upon it—There is such an obscure, yet upon the whole urgent and habitual tendency, incidental to men at the outset of their

religious course; and even abiding with them, as it did with Paul and his disciples in our text, for a long time after they had entered upon it. They know not perfectly or precisely what is the matter with them, or what that is which is correctly suited to the disease or the deficiency under which they labour. They would fain give vent to all this feeling of want and of necessity in prayer; but, hazy and unsettled as their spiritual conceptions are, they know not what to pray for as they ought. We think that there must be some present, whose inward experience responds to the sketch that we now set before you—whose hearts are filled with desirousness, but who, incapable of shaping the expression of it into any distinct or definite prayers, send forth instead the sighs and the aspirations which bespeak little more than a soul in earnest. Amid all these struggles then, between the fervent sincerity of the feelings on the one hand, and the cloudiness of apprehension and intellect on the other, it is somewhat satisfactory to perceive, that even the apostle and his converts, after they had received the fruits of the Spirit, had experience of the very same thing—that before their eye too, there passed such floating uncertainties of yet distant and unrealised attainment as they could not embody—that, under the pressure of yet unsatisfied desire and a still remaining ignorance of what they would be at, they heaved ejaculations rather than prayers; and that because they knew not what to pray for as they ought.

'But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

It is still more satisfactory to be told, as we are in this clause, that, in those general and vague but withal very intense and earnest aspirations of soul which we have now adverted to, there is, not only a resemblance to the habit of Paul himself and of those disciples who had the first-fruits of the Spirit, but that it is the Spirit itself who dictates and inspires them. When the Spirit maketh intercession for us, it is not by any direct supplication from Himself to God the Father in behalf of any one individual; but it is by pouring upon that individual, the Spirit of grace and supplication. The man whom He prays for, is in fact the organ of His prayer. The prayer passes, as it were, from the Spirit through him who is the object of it. Those groanings of the Spirit of God which cannot be uttered, are those unutterable desires wherewith the heart of a seeker after Zion is charged; and which, in defect of language, perhaps even in defect of very clear and definite conceptions, can only find vent in the ardent but unspeakable breathings of one who feels his need and longs to be relieved from it—who hath a strong and general appetency after righteousness, and yet can only sigh it forth in ejaculations of intense earnestness. Now these are called here the groanings of the Spirit of God, because it is in fact He who hath awakened them in the spirit of man. When He intercedes for a believer, the believer's own heart is the channel through which the intercession finds its way to the throne of grace. It is not that there is any want either of light or of utterance about Him; but He doeth His work gradually upon us, and often in-

fuses a desirousness into our hearts before He reveals the truth with distinctness unto our understandings. He walketh by progressive footsteps, in accomplishing the creation of a new moral world —even as He did when employed in the creation of our present system of materialism. He then moved upon the face of the waters, before He said Let there be light and there was light. The dark and muddy element was first put into agitation, and the very turbulence into which it was thrown may have just thickened at the first that very chaos out of which it was emerging; and so it often is with him who is born of the Spirit, when the Spirit begins to move upon his soul. There is labour without light—there is a strong and general excitement without a clear guidance, either where you are to turn, or on what visible path you are to enter—there is a busy fermentation of shadowy and floating desires and indistinct feelings, whether of a present misery or a future and somehow attainable enlargement—And, these all come forth in the very indications of our text—proceeding originally from God's Spirit, but passing through the intermedium of man's; and, while struggling there with the darkness and obstinate carnality of nature, giving rise to a vigour and a vehemence of emotion that discharges itself in sighs but not in articulations. If any here experience such a condition, or make any approximations towards it, let him not despair—for it may be the Spirit that is at work with him; and he may now be labouring in the agonies of his new birth, in the distress of his coming regeneration.

That among the first-fruits of the Spirit, there should be the prayers of deep and desirous earnestness, is in perfect harmony with the order of the administration of grace. It gives important insight into the methods of the divine economy in this world, when we observe that the promises of God are meant not to suspend but to stimulate our prayers. And, accordingly, after that He has declared, He will give the clean heart and the right spirit, He saith, yet for all these things must I be enquired after. Before, in fact, that He poureth those influences upon the soul by which it becometh rich in all spiritual accomplishments, He poureth upon it a sense of its own barrenness, and a correspondent longing after the right feelings and fertilities of a new creature; and so anterior, to all other supplies from the sanctuary that is above, did He pour on the house of David of the Spirit of grace and supplication. One of His promises is to turn the soul into a well-watered garden—yet, ere this is realised, there must be a felt thirst on the part of the soul; a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, before that it is filled; an appetite that craves to be satisfied, ere the satisfying food is administered; a seeking that precedes the finding: And so from the descriptions of prophecy it would appear, that, when the desert is made to flourish, it is by the pouring forth of water upon thirsty ground—upon ground not merely destitute, but that feels as it were and desires to be relieved. Let us cease to wonder then, that prayer should appear among the foremost indications of the Spirit of God being at work with us; or that it takes the

precedency of other blessings; or that it has happened so frequently in the church, that a season of supplication went before the season either of a gracious deliverance or of a gracious revival; or that with individuals too, as well as with communities, ere you can point to any one of them as rejoicing in the hope or as fruitful in all the righteousness of the gospel, you find him earnest in supplication —and perhaps too a supplication that is not spoken, that does not find articulation for its effluxes from the heart, that does not even proceed on any very clear or distinct conception of what the want is or what are the supplies which are expressly suited thereunto; but that, in the language of my text, ascends in general and undirected fervency from the soul with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And neither are we to wonder, that, though this be indeed the Spirit's doing, yet, nevertheless, there is a mixture of darkness and distress in the whole operation. There is perfect light and liberty with Him. But when He comes into contact, and especially at the first, with a soul before dead in trespasses and sins—when He has to operate on that mass of carnality, where He finds nought but one inert and sluggish mass of resistance—when, instead of doing the work separately and by Himself, He does it through the opake medium of a corrupt human soul—We should not marvel, though the prayers that even He hath originated, be tinged with the obscurity of that dull and distorted medium through which they have to pass. We know that to the sun in the firmament, we should ascribe not merely the splendour of the risen day, but even

the faintest streaks and glimmerings of incipient twilight; and that without him, all would be thick and impenetrable darkness. It is besause of the gross and intervening earth, that, though something be seen at the earliest dawn of morn, it is yet seen so dimly, and the eye is still bewildered among visionary and unsettled forms, while it wanders over the landscape. And, in like manner, it is the Spirit to whom we shall owe at last the effulgence of a complete manifestation; and to whom also we owe at present even the misty and troubled light that hath excited us to seek, but is scarcely able to guide us in our enquiries. And this imperfection is not because of Himself, in whom there is perfect and unclouded splendour. It is only because of the gross and terrestrial mind upon which He operates. There is the conflict of two ingredients, even the light that is in Him and the darkness that is in us; and the result of the conflict is prayer, but prayer mixed with much remaining ignorance. It is the mixture of His intercession with our unutterable groanings—an obscure day that precedes the daylight of the soul—a lustre that cometh from Him, but tarnished with the soil and broken with the turbulence of our own accursed nature. And let us not think it strange therefore, that, as the compound effect of God's Spirit working with our spirit, and not overbearing our infirmities but only yet helping these infirmities—let us cease to think it strange, if the effect should only be a certain vehemence or urgency of desire, but still in some measure vague or undirected, because of a still abiding darkness in the soul. And

again therefore, to comfort all who are labouring among the disquietudes of such a condition, we repeat, that, even amid the mazes and uncertainties in which they toil and have as yet had little satisfaction, the Spirit, for aught we know, may even now be at work with them. The heavenly visitant may have made His entrance, and have begun the process of a glorious transformation on the materials of their inward chaos. The spiritual twilight may now be breaking out as the harbinger of a coming glory, as the dim flickerings of that light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

There is an example remarkably analogous to this in the old prophets. They spake only as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. They poured forth their predictions only as the Spirit gave them utterance; and though He of course knew the meaning of all that He had inspired Himself, yet they themselves, though the organs for the conveyance of His intimations to the world, knew but little or nothing of the sense that lay under them. And, accordingly, we are informed by the apostle Peter of the very singular attitude in which they stood—as prying into the sense of their own prophecies—as searching and enquiring diligently into the nature of that coming grace, whereof the Holy Ghost had given them certain warnings, which to themselves were unintelligible—as speculating what thing it could be, and what manner of time it was which the Spirit of Christ in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. It was not in fact unto themselves but unto us that

they did minister; and though the resemblance does not hold throughout, yet we may gather from the case that we are now quoting, how in like manner as holy men of old knew not the meaning of those predictions wherewith themselves were inspired—so holy men of the present day, and more especially at the outset of their holiness, might feel the inspiration of a strong desirousness from above, and yet be ignorant of the whole force and meaning of their own prayers. There may be a decided fervour of prayerfulness—an aspiring tendency after better things—yet a most indistinct apprehension of what the things really are of which they most stand in need, and that most suited them. And so at the very time that the Spirit helpeth their infirmities, they know not what to pray for as they ought; and at the very time that the Spirit itself maketh intercession for them, do they send forth groanings from the recesses of their now touched and awakened souls which cannot be uttered.

But, in conclusion, it ought to be remarked that this state of darkness is not a desirable one to be persisted in. One would not choose to live always in twilight; but rather does he press onward, in wish and in expectation, to the coming day. Labour after distinct and satisfying apprehensions of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Seek to know your disease; and seek to know the powers and the properties of that medicine, which is set forth in the gospel. Study and search with diligence, and by a careful perusal of Holy Writ, into the economy of man's restoration—the blood which atones—the righteousness which justifies—the sanctify-

ing power that maketh holy—the law that before your reconciliation condemns you, and that after your reconciliation becomes the rule by which you are to walk, the compass by which you are to guide your movements towards heaven. Even in this work too you must have the Spirit to help your infirmities. For He is the Spirit of wisdom, as well as of prayer, and gives you revelation in the knowledge of Christ. You increase by Him in acquaintance with God; and though at the beginning of His work, and perhaps for some time afterwards, there may be a sore conflict of doubts and desires and difficulties—yet such is the process of this work, that you will at length come to experience that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is light—where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

But still it ought ever to be kept in mind, that, while we are in this tabernacle, there will to the latest hour of our abode, be a remainder of darkness. There may be a brightening manifestation of divine things, as we proceed onwards. But our outlook towards them, will be through the loopholes of a bedimmed and tainted materialism. Still we shall see through a glass darkly. It is in fact with the light of the gospel, as it is with its love and its peace and its holiness. It will be compounded with the grossness of an earthly nature. It will be shaded with an incumbent carnality. The realities of faith will be seen, not through a purely ethereal medium, but through a curtain as it were—the transparency whereof shall have much of the soil and the tarnish of nature pervading it. And this

transparency, though clarified as we advance, will never be perfect on this side of death. Insomuch that the complaint of our text will be found to suit the Christians of all degrees, the disciples of all stages. Still we shall not know all the things which we should pray for as we ought. Still will the Spirit be needed to help this infirmity. Still will His illumination have to meet and to struggle with the impediments of a vile body; and the desirousness after more light, still outstripping the actual attainment, will vent itself forth, in some degree as at the first, in aspirations that are yet indefinite—in groanings that are yet unutterable. Let this teach, in all our meditation and study upon things that are sacred, still to proceed on the incapacity of Nature for the right apprehension of them—still to recognise the Holy Ghost in His office as a revealer—still, in our perusals of the word, to court the guidance of that Spirit, through whom it is alone that the word shines with clear and convincing lustre upon the soul—still to meet the promise of help to the infirmity of our understanding with a prayer for that help: And thus shall we be enabled, more and more, to order our speech and our argument aright before God—to pray intelligently as well as affectionately—and to body forth those desires which now actuate us in a way so vague and undefinable, to body them forth in words that may be audibly uttered, in conceptions that may be distinctly seized upon.

Ver. 27. 'And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.'

You may perhaps not have reflected much on the office of the Spirit as an intercessor—viewing this as more properly the office of the now exalted Saviour. The Saviour intercedes for us in heaven. The Spirit intercedes for us in our own breast. The one intercession is pure and altogether unmixed with the dross of earthliness. The other passes through a corrupt medium, and finds its way among the adverse impediments of an earthly nature; and by the time that it cometh forth in expression, has had to encounter the elements of darkness and of carnality that are within us. And, not from any defect in the power which originates our prayers, but from a defect in the organ by which they are conveyed, do they arise as so many broken and indistinct aspirations to Him who sitteth on the throne. The man from whom they ascend is perhaps conscious of nothing but a deep and determined earnestness—thoroughly intent on being right, yet clouded and confused it may be in his apprehensions as to the way of becoming so—not knowing therefore what he should pray for, yet in virtue of the Spirit's operation pouring out the ejaculations of utmost feeling and utmost fervency. Now, in like manner as the holy men of old when moved by the Holy Ghost did not understand the predictions that were put into their mouths, so might holy men now though similarly moved not understand their own prayers. All that they are sensible of may be a spirit of prayerfulness venting itself in the breathings that are not articulated, in the groans that cannot be uttered. But though they have no such insight into the workings and

expressions of their own heart, God who searcheth the heart discerns them thoroughly. He knows from what quarter they come—whether from His own pure Spirit, or from that corrupt origin whence there issueth nought but that which is abomination in His sight. He can distinguish between the genuine and the counterfeit; and, more especially is He acquainted with the mind of His own Spirit—even as man is acquainted with his own thoughts. If from the former—the prayer that has been suggested, even though it announce nothing to the man himself but the intense desirousness whereby he feels that he is actuated, announces most clearly to God all the characters of truth and rightness and conformity with the whole views and spirit of His government which can recommend it to his acceptance. He will meet with graciousness the supplication that Himself hath awakened. He hath said in another place that if any man ask that which is agreeable to the will of God, He will give it to him. Now what the Spirit suggests though darkly to the man himself, yet clearly to Him who searcheth man's heart and can ascertain the character of every movement that is experienced there—whatever is thus suggested must be agreeable to the will of God, and have the very recommendation upon which God hath pledged Himself to entertain and to answer it.

LECTURE LIX.

ROMANS, viii, 28.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

He recurs again in this verse to the topic that he introduced in the eighteenth verse, even to the sufferings of the present time; and, after having contrasted them with the glory and the enlargement of their future prospects, and having adverted not merely to the hope that will be realised then but also to the help that is administered now, he, as a last argument for reconciling his disciples to all the adversities of their earthly condition, affirms that they all work together for their good; that even the crosses and disasters of life are so many blessings in disguise; and that the whole machinery of Providence, in fact, is at work for the accomplishment of a great and beneficent purpose towards them. It, in the first place, is abundantly obvious of many a single adversity—that a great and permanent good may come out of it. This is often verified on the ground even of every-day experience—when the disease brought on by intemperance hath been known to germinate a course of determined sobriety; and the loss by a daring speculation hath checked the adventurer on his hazardous path, and turned him into the walk of safe though moderate prosperity; and the felt discomfort of a quarrel hath made him a far more

patient and pacific member of society than he else would have been; and many other visitations, unpalatable on the instant but profitable afterwards, have each turned out to have in it the wholesomeness of a medical draught as well as its bitterness. Apart from Christianity, or from the bearings which our history on earth has on our preparation for heaven—Man has often found that it was good for him to have been afflicted—that, under the severe but salutary discipline, wisdom has been increased, and character has been strengthened, and the rough independence of human wilfulness has been tamed, and many asperities of temper have been worn away; and he, who before was the boisterous and implacable and unsafe member of society, has been chastened down into all the arts and delicacies of pleasing companionship. And so of many a single infliction on the man who is viewed, not as a citizen of the world that is below, but as a candidate for the world that is above. The overthrow of his fortune has given him a strong practical set for eternity. The death of his child has weaned him from all the idolatries of a scene—whereof the family, the home, the peace and shelter of the domestic roof, formed the most powerful enchantments. Even the dreariness of remorse hath given a new energy to his spiritual frame, and made him both a more skilful and a more vigilant warrior on the field of contest than before. The tempests of life, if so withstood that they have not overthrown him, will have fastened him more stedfastly to the hold of religious principle. It is thus that the traveller through life is nurtured for the

immortality beyond it. He is made perfect by sufferings. He sits more loose to the world, in proportion as he finds less in it to fascinate and detain him. Its very disappointments have the effect of throwing him upon other resources; and, casting away the desires and the delusions of the hope that perisheth, he clings as to the alone anchor of his soul by the hope that abideth for ever. On the scale of infinite duration, a present evil becomes a future and everlasting benefit; and we are at no loss to perceive, how even a calamity, that to the eye looks most tremendous and would overwhelm one of the children of this world in despair—how it may work for the good of one of the children of light, by working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

But these adverse visitations do not always come singly. The apostle supposes otherwise, as may be gathered from the phrase of all things working together. He supposes in the text, not one single influence from one event alone; but he supposes the mutual or the concurrent influence of two or more events, all verging however towards the one result of good for him to whom they have befallen. It has often been said that misfortunes seldom come by themselves; and there is no doubt that it often occurs, when one passage of our history is signalised by an accumulation of ills—when, instead of being called upon to measure our strength with one calamity, our attention is shared and distracted among several—when the boding dread of disaster and distress lowrs upon us from more than one quarter of that visible sphere by which we are surrounded—and when we are made the subjects, not of

one, but of manifold tribulations. It has often been alleged that the pressure of each distinct calamity is lightened, when the anxiety is thus dispersed and divided among several. I do not think so. I hold it easier to meet with the summoned intrepidity of the bosom one great and nearly overwhelming misfortune,—than it is to have a constant tumult kept up in the spirits, by the ceaseless play of so many petty yet interminable harassments. I hold it a less ineligible condition, to have all the energies of the soul collected and prepared for a mighty shock of adversity, than to have them wasted in the skirmishes of a lighter yet more complicated warfare. I hold it not only an occasion of greater glory, but positively an occasion of greater ease, when one tremendous combatant approaches on whom there hang the fearful issues of life, or of that which than life is dearer—than when doomed by the stings of an insect tribe to die by inches, or to spend in perpetual annoyance the remainder of your days. And therefore it is well, that, for the comfort of exercised humanity, deliverance is promised out of six and of seven troubles; and when we are told that the afflictions of the just are many, but that God will extricate out of them all; and when we are bidden to count it all joy, though we should fall not into one but into manifold temptations; and lastly, when we are assured by the apostle that, not merely one, but that all things work together for good unto them who love God. For it is the compounding of one evil thing with another that aggravates so much the distress of each of them; and the sensation of plague or of perplexity increases in a much

faster proportion, than their number; and, like the problem of the three bodies, one additional element of distress more might make the line of prudence far more difficult, and every plan and every prospect far more inscrutable than before: And thus though each of his cares might be easily provided for, could one meet each with undivided strength, and bend upon it the whole force of his anxiety—yet, from the very multitude of them, might there ensue a general helplessness, that needs to have the precise consolation which is now before us. The mechanism of Providence is made up of so many parts, as often to baffle the comprehension of man—yet all is clear to the eye, and under the sovereign hand of Him who works it; and when we are lost in the bewilderments of a history that we cannot scan, when we are entangled among the mazes of a labyrinth that we cannot unravel, it is well to be told that all is ordered and that all worketh for good.

I should imagine that I now speak to the experience of those, who, manifold in the adventures of business, have a very extended circumference around them, from every quarter of which fears and mischances and the arrivals of disastrous intelligence might bring fresh and frequent disquietudes into the soul; and who therefore may have felt what it was to be visited with one plague after another—perhaps agonised in all the moral sensibilities of your nature, by some aggravated wrong of injustice; and ere you have recovered this shock, told of some menacing fluctuation in that market where the main bulk of your interest lies; and

furthermore waiting on the rack of anxiety for the appearance of that richly-laden vessel, which some recent storm must have put in jeopardy, and that with the eye of midnight fancy you conceive to be fearfully rocking amid the surges of an angry ocean: And all this mixed up with the rumoured bankruptcy of customers and correspondents, with bills unanswered and the swift approaches of that time when payments that far exceed your present strength shall be imperiously required—These are the foreign invaders of your peace, and should they meet unhappily with the broils and the miseries of a distempered home—should these days of vexation be followed up by evenings of discontent and discordancy; or, what is also grievous, should there be peace and love in your dwelling, but its dearest inmate be laid on the couch of irrecoverable sickness—should one child of the family be dying, or another by his vice and his wilfulness minister a grief as heavy to the hearts of his parents—should the burden upon his spirit, which this sorely agitated man brings with him daily from abroad, have nought to alleviate its pressure within the door of his own habitation—What a noble faith it would require to bear him up under the weight and accumulation of all these evils; and is there ought within the compass of nature so suited to his weary and heavy-laden spirit, as the assurance of my text that all of them shall work and work together for his good?

You must often have been sensible, in the course of your own history, how big and how important the consequences were, that emanated from one

event, which in itself was insignificant—how on the slightest accidents the greatest interests were suspended—how, moving apparently at random, you met with people or with occasions that gave rise perhaps to far the most memorable passages in your life—how the very street on which you chanced to move, brought you into contact with invitations or appointments or proposals of any sort, which brought results of magnitude along with them—Insomuch that the colour and direction of your whole futurity have turned on what, apart from this mighty bearing, would have been the veriest trifle in the world. It is thus that the great drama of a nation's politics may hinge on the veriest bagatelle, that could modify or suggest some process of thought in the heart of a single individual. The most remarkable instance of this which I at present recollect, is, when the pursuers of Mahomet who followed hard upon him with a view to take his life, were turned away from the mouth of the cave in which he had the moment before taken shelter, by the flight of a bird from one of the shrubs that grew at its entry—inferring that, had he recently passed that way, the bird must have been previously disturbed away and would not now have made its appearance. It is a striking remark of the historian, that this bird, by its flight upon this occasion, changed the destiny of the world—instrumental as it was in perpetuating the life of the false prophet, and, along with him, the reign of that superstition which to this day hath a wider ascendancy over our species than Christianity itself. And such indeed are the links and

concatenations of all history. A word, a thought, an unforeseen emotion, an event of paltriest dimensions in itself, may be the germ of an influence wide as a continent and lasting as a thousand years; and thus it is that the politics of man are baffled in the mystery of that higher politics, by which the government of the Supreme is conducted, and whereby the minutest accidents and the mightiest results interchange and have equal efficacy the one upon the other. It is well that God has the management; and that what to man is a chaos, is in the hands of God a sure and unerring mechanism. Man is lost and wilders in the multiplicity of things, and their diverse operations; and he staggers and is at his wit's end; and therefore it is well that all things are under the control of that great and presiding intelligence which is above, and that God maketh all things work together for good unto those who love Him.

To conclude then for the present. Do you not peceive that at this rate God would be divested of His sovereignty, if His superintendence were not universal? Is not the historical fact, that what is most minute often gives rise to what is most momentous, an argument for the theological doctrine of a providence that reaches even to the slightest and most unnoticeable varieties? If God did not number all the hairs of our head—if His appointments did not include the fall of every sparrow to the ground—then, from the observed relation of events to each other, empires might have fallen, and the faith of whole nations been subverted, and the greatest evolutions been made in the progress

of human affairs, all the time that the will of God and the authority of God were elements of utter insignificance. Should He let go as it were one small ligament in the vast and complicated machinery of the world, it might all run, so to speak, into utter divergency from the purposes of the mind that formed it. As things are constituted, the influence of littles carries along with it an experimental demonstration, that the power and direction of the Godhead extend even unto littles. From it we argue, that there is no alternative between a providence so particular as to embrace all, or an atheism so universal as to exclude all, from the guidance and the guardianship of a Divinity. In such a world, where all are so bound together in the way of influence or unvarying succession, there is need of such a providence. And even from this contemplation, may be gotten something that should reconcile us to the idea of a predestinating God. In the following verses the apostle passes onwards to this conception; and we shall be more prepared to go along with him, when we only think, that, by shutting out the ordination of God from any event in nature or in history, we, in fact, shut Him out from that lengthened train of events, whereof it only formed one of the stepping-stones —that by breaking one link, however small, we in fact wrest the chain out of that hand from which it was suspended—that, by refusing Him the supreme and directing agency over the least incidents, we in fact depose Him from all government of men or of things, even in the greatest passages of their story—In a word, that we cannot disjoin God from

one particle of the universe, without desolating the universe of its God.

'To them that love God.' We have already spoken of His providence; and of the sureness wherewith He works out His own purposes by a mechanism far too complex for our apprehension; and of the way in which He intermingles the little with the great in the history of human affairs; and of the need that there is for a constant superintendance by Him—seeing that on the minutest incidents of life its mightiest and most abiding interests are often made to turn; and of the support which a sound experience renders to a most important doctrine of sound theology—even that God, instead of sitting in remote and lofty unconcern to our world, save in the noblest and grandest passages of its history, busies Himself in fact with the operations of every atom, and bears a microscopic regard to the most trivial of events and of things—even while He sits in heaven's high throne, and casts a directing eye over space and its immeasurable regions. This we have already attempted to make as palpable to your discernment as we could; and we are now led by the clause that is before us, to bethink ourselves of the character of those to whom it is that God maketh all things work together for their good—even that they love God.

We seldom meet with so much of earnestness among those who are intent on their preparation for heaven, as that which is excited by the question whether ornot they really do love God. It is indeed a trying question on which few adventure themselves; and on which most of those who do,

have to record that marvellously little satisfaction is to be found. It forms one of the most anxious topics of self-examination; and the thing which the enquirer is in search after, even the affection for the Godhead that exists in his own bosom, may be either so dull and undiscernible of itself, or lie so buried in the multitude of other things that crowd and confuse the receptacles of the inner man, as to elude the investigation altogether. And then the question comes, how am I to be assured of my interest in the declaration that all things shall work together for my good? The promise here is not unto all in the general, but to those who harbour within them a certain feeling, and are stamped upon their moral or spiritual nature with a certain character. It is unto those who love God. Now I may not be sure that I love Him. "I may desire to love Him; but to desire is one thing and to do is another. I may have a wish for the affection—of this I should suppose that many of you are conscious; but to have a wish for the affection is not to have the affection itself, and the question recurs—what title have I to appropriate the comforts of this passage, or to presume on the strength of an affirmation that is evidently restricted to the possessors of a certain grace, even of love to God—what title have I to imagine, that the power and the providence of Heaven are wholly upon my side?

Now it does not follow, that you are altogether destitute of love to God, because it stirs so languidly within you, that you are not able very distinctly or decidedly to recognise it. Your very desire to love Him is a good symptom—your very grief that you

love Him not bodes favourably for you. The complaint that you utter of a heart hard and ungrateful, and that hath been very much unmoved by the claims which God hath to all the affections of it—is one which has been re-echoed by the disciples and the saints of all ages; and which, if you feel as you ought, will to the end of life be the subject of your humiliation and your prayers. Love to God is a heavenly aspiration, that is ever kept in check by the drag and the restraint of an earthly nature; and from which you shall not be unbound till the soul by death has made its escape from the vile body, and cleared its unfettered way to the realms of light and life and liberty. In very proportion to the desirousness wherewith you now soar aloft, will you be galled by the tenicle that holds you; and, feeling with the Psalmist of old how your soul cleaves unto the dust, will you pray that God might quicken you. Where there is a complaint of hardness, there is in fact a beginning of tenderness. Where there is an honest wish for affection, there is in fact the embryo affection itself, struggling for a growth and an establishment in the aspiring bosom. Where there is a feeling of sad insensibility, the sensibility hath begun; and that good seed, which one can with difficulty see among the still vigorous and unbroken elements of carnality, is already deposited, and will rise into a tree that might overspread with its droppings the whole mass of our then regenerated nature. Meanwhile it is most desirable that the germ should expand—that the precious element should be fostered into a more visible magnitude—that the affection,

of which you are now so fruitlessly in quest, should so grow as to announce itself—that the flame should brighten and break forth out of its present dull and lambent obscurity: And the question is, how shall this be brought about? Never we affirm by the exercise of self-inspection alone—never in the mere employment of inwardly brooding on the characters that are already graven upon the tablet of the heart—never by looking to oneself as the subject, at the time when you are called to look unto the Saviour as the object. The eye is not a luminary. It sheds no light on the field of its contemplation. It diffuses no heat over it. It only witnesses the splendour, but can in no way create it. It may discover that which is visible, but it does not make it visible; and, therefore, if you complain that you cannot see the love of God within you, it is not by poring and penetrating among the arcana of your moral constitution that this love is to be inspired.

'To those who are the called.' This new clause may be turned to some practical account in the resolving of the difficulty. They who love God are described by another and a distinct characteristic. They are the called, by which we understand not those who have merely had the call or invitation of the gospel sounded in their ears; but those who have felt the power of the call upon their hearts, and have complied with it accordingly. In the well-weighed language of our Shorter Catechism, it signifies those who are effectually called. There has not merely been a call on the part of the gospel, but there has been a compliance with it on the part of their souls—and that just because the gos-

pel hath come to them, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and with much assurance. Their eyes have been opened to behold the reality of the gospel overtures. They recognise the death of Christ as an effective propitiation for sin. They perceive that the benefit of this propitiation is held out in offer to them individually. They hear the beseeching voice of God accompanied with such terms as *any* and *all* and *whosoever;* and they understand this to be as good as a voice addressed specifically to each of themselves; and they regard a message, so couched and so worded, to be a message from Heaven to their own doors; and as the message is neither more nor less than an entreaty on the part of God that they will be reconciled to Him, they respond to it with the full consent and confidence of their hearts; and by so doing they in fact enter upon reconciliation. Their faith in the offer constitutes their acceptance of it. By meeting God's assurance with their trust, they will find, that, according to this trust, so shall it be done unto them. By simply regarding the transaction of the sacrifice for sin as a real and honest transaction, they shall have a full share in it, and be absolved from their sin. Many are outwardly called; but, turning a deaf and listless ear thereunto, they come not under the designation of my text. They are not the called—a designation reserved for those, who have not only heard the call, but who have perceived its honesty and worth, and have proceeded upon it.

You see then the connection that there is, between the two characteristics of those for whose

good God maketh all things to work together. The two characteristics are that they love God, and that they are the called. The second of these in the order of enumeration, is the first in the order of succession. It is only upon our entertaining the call of the gospel and consenting thereunto, it is only upon this transition taking place in our minds—that there ensues a transition of the heart to the love of God, from that indifference or even hatred which we formerly bore unto Him. Anterior to this, the thought of God stood associated with feelings of jealousy and insecurity and alarm. The conscience, if at all faithful, could not fail to reproach us for our delinquencies. The law of God, and more especially if regarded in its pure and lofty and uncompromising character, could not but suggest the disturbing imagination of many accounts that were unsettled, and many violations for which no recompence to its outraged dignity had been made. The character of God, as being that of august and unapproachable sacredness, offered no asylum from the disquietudes that haunted us; nor could we ever, with our eyes open to the incommutable attributes of His holiness and His justice and His truth, could we ever find any solid repose in that fancied indulgence of His nature, which forms at once the refuge and the delusion of a meagre and sentimental piety. Those imaginations of the Godhead, which make up a religion of poetry, are not enough for a religion of peace; and, in these circumstances, He, to all practical accounts, is regarded by the eye of nature with that dread and that disquietude, which are inspired by the sight of an

enemy. It is a sense of guilt that has so alienated us from God; and it is under the latent yet powerful conviction of His displeasure, that we stand before Him with our hearts in chill and torpid apathy, and our countenances fallen. It is this which stands as a wall of iron between heaven and earth; and wholly debars the intimacies either of confidence or of regard, with Him who dwelleth in the high and the awful sanctuary. And the only way, we repeat it, by which this else impregnable barrier can be scaled, and we can draw nigh in kind affection to the Father who made us, is by accepting the only authentic offer that He ever held out to us of reconciliation. It is by beholding Him in the face of Christ. It is by rejoicing in that mercy which flows so copiously on all who will, through the channel of His consecrated priesthood —and that not at the expence of His other attributes, but with their fullest and noblest vindication. It is this alone which by quelling the suspicions and the fears of guilty nature, at the very time that it presents the attractive exhibition of a God whose graciousness hath not impaired but illustrated His glory—it is this alone that can achieve the great moral revolution in the character of man; and by rending the enmity of nature, can soften the before sullen and intractable heart of man, for the impression of that new character in virtue of which it now loves God.

Now it is by the recurrence of the mind to that truth which first conveyed to it the love of God, that this affection is upholden—just as to rekindle your admiration of a beautiful scene or picture,

you would return again to gaze upon it. It is on this principle that so much stress is laid on keeping the truths which we believe in memory—insomuch, that, if not so recalled and dwelt upon, we are said to have believed them in vain. The doctrines of the gospel are intended for a further purpose than that of merely making up a creed. One main design of them is to move the affections; and, more especially, to reawaken that affection to which nature, when oppressed with fears or weighed down with the lethargies of sense, is wholly incompetent—even the love of God. And that this love be perennial in our hearts, there must be a constant reference to the truth which first inspired it. The way to keep our hearts in the love of God, is to build ourselves up on our most holy faith. To recall the emotion when it hath vanished from our heart, we must recall the truth which hath vanished from our remembrance. The way to aliment and perpetuate the one, is to detain the other, and let it be the habitual topic of our fondest contemplation. You complain of your love to God being so exceedingly dim as to be beyond the reach of your discernment. I know of no other way to brighten it, than simply to think of Him as He is, and more especially as He stands forth to the believer's eye in the glass of His own revelation—as abundant in mercy, but mercy shrined as it were in the immutabilities of truth and holiness—as longing for the approaches even of the guiltiest of His children, but laying His firm and authoritative interdict on that approach in any other way than by the appointed mediatorship—as turning His

throne into a throne of grace, but without undermining the eternal props of judgment and of righteousness by which it is upholden—as mingling in His own character the tenderness of a friend, with the venerable dignity of a Sovereign—as blending at once in that economy which He hath set up over His erring creatures, the meekness of a paternal government with the majesty of its power. The man who is groping for the discovery of an affection towards God among the secrecies of his own inscrutable bosom, I would bid him cast an upward eye to the revealed countenance of the Godhead; and this will do something more than discover the affection,—it will create it. Ere it can be made manifest, it must be made to exist; and, most assuredly, it is not by downwardly probing and penetrating among the mysteries of your own moral constitution, that you will summon it into being. Ere you can love God, you must see Him to be lovely; and this is a vision which the terrors of unexpiated guilt, and the sense of a controversy with God that has not yet been satisfactorily or intelligibly made up, are sure to scare away. It is the gospel, and it alone, that resolves this obstruction—nor am I aware of any expedient by which the first and the greatest law can again be established within us, than by accepting the call of that gospel wherein He is propounded as a just God and a Saviour.

'According to his purpose'—or according to His previous design. We now tread on the borders of what is deemed by many to be a great mystery; and though we have no great respect for that Theo-

logy which loves to grapple with the incomprehensibles of lofty speculation—yet we must not shrink from ought that Scripture lays across our path. There is an ambition on the part of some to be wise above that which is written; but that is no reason why, in avoiding this, we should not attempt at least to be wise up to that which is written. You may remember that a few chapters ago, which, from the exceeding tardiness of our progress, makes it nearly as many years ago—we came to an encounter with the very formidable doctrine of original sin, and found the task so ponderous that it took several successive Sabbaths ere we did acquit ourselves thereof. The few succeeding verses present us with a similar exercise on the doctrine of predestination; and we most assuredly would not embark on so arduous an undertaking, did we not hold it right to follow fearlessly wherever the light of revelation may carry us; and did we not further believe, that, like all other Scripture, this too is profitable, and in most entire harmony with the interests of truth and virtue in our world.

The purpose then signifies a previous design; and this in so far previous, as to be even anterior to the existence of those who are the objects of it. In the second epistle to Timothy there is an allusion to this very purpose of our text, and where it stands associated too with the very call that is now under consideration. "God hath saved us," says the apostle, "not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given in Christ Jesus before the world began." The purpose then is the prior determination in the

mind of the Divinity, that such a one should be converted from the error of his ways—should be called from darkness unto light—should make that transition by which he passes from a state of condemnation to a state of acceptance; and the call, which we have already supposed to be an effectual one, is just as distinguishable from this previous determination, as the execution of a purpose is from the purpose itself—or as a design entertained and resolved epon long ago is from its fulfilment, that may only take place this very day, or at some distant and indefinite futurity before us. 'Moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called.' By the one He makes the decree—by the other He carries it into effect. And we again repeat, that it is not in the daring spirit of an adventurer we would have you to enter this field, or on a game of strength or of skill with the difficulties of human argument; but in the simple and lowly spirit of genuine disciples would we have you to submit yourselves to the Divine testimony.

It is quite obvious that the being *called* here means something totally different, from what it does in the verse where it is said that many are called but few are chosen. In that verse the call of the gospel is supposed to be heard by many, but complied with by few. But in the verse before us they who are the called have not only heard the call, but they have responded to it. In the one sense all who are here present, may be made to pass among the called, simply by sounding forth among you the offers and the invitations of grace—simply by bidding, as we are fully warranted to do, each

and all to put his confidence in the blood of Christ, and so have his sins washed away—simply by coming forth with the assurance, which we cast fearlessly abroad in the hearing of the people, that there is no man, be his guilt what it may, whom God will not welcome into peace with Him, would he only draw nigh in the name of that great propitiation which has been rendered for the sins of the world. In this sense every one of you is called. But it must be clear to your own experience, that there is the widest possible difference between one class and another as to their reception of this call—that on some it falls in downright bluntness, and moves them not out of the deep unconcern and lethargy of nature—whilst others recognise it as a voice from Heaven; and are awakened thereby to a sense of reconciliation; and feel a charm and a preciousness in the doctrine of that cross, whereon the enmity between God and a sinful world was done away; and through the faith which they are enabled to put in the word of this testimony, are translated into a felt peace and friendship with that God, who turns away His displeasure from them on the moment that they turn away their distrust from Him: And thus, while you all in one sense of the word are called, they are the latter class alone who are the called of my text—because, called effectually, they have not only heard the call but answered it. Here then is a palpable difference between two sets of hearers, that falls to be accounted for; and the account every where given of it in Scripture is, that the Spirit, who bloweth where He listeth, hath carried the message with power to the listener's

heart in the one case, and hath not gone along with it in the other—that He hath inclined the one to God's testimonies, and left the other to his own waywardness—that wherever a saving impression has been made, there the Holy Ghost has been at work, who, operating not without the word but by the word, hath fulfilled on the person of the new believer, that purpose which God conceived in his favour before the foundation of the world.

But let not any feel himself thrown at a distance from salvation, by thus connecting it with the antecedent decree of God respecting it. We are sure that none ought, who feel a true moral earnestness on the subject, and are honestly and desirously embarked on the pursuit of their immortal well-being. For though the Spirit bloweth where He listeth, yet He listeth so to do on all who court and who aspire after Him; and though by His work upon a human soul He is fulfilling a design that hath been conceived from eternity, yet it is not with this past design but with the present fulfilment that you have to do: And the matter in hand, the matter with which you should feel yourself urged and occupied, is, that by the operation of that Spirit you may indeed be enlightened in the truth of God, and made wise unto your own salvation. For this purpose let me assure you of His readiness to help and to visit all who ask Him—let me entreat your attention to that Bible, which with Him is the mighty instrument, whereby the understanding and the heart and all the faculties of man are gained over to that truth, which is able at once to sanctify and to save us—let me press

you to awake and be active in the work, putting forth all the strength that is in you, and confident that if you really do so more strength will be given —So that if the whole force which you have now be honestly and heartily directed to the object, by force the kingdom of heaven will be carried.

LECTURE LX.

ROMANS, viii, 29.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."

THERE is a vast and immeasurable progression of events, between the conception of God's will in the depths of the eternity that is past, and the full consummation of that will in the yet unresolved mysteries of the eternity that is to come. And we occupy our given place along the line of that progression. We form one in the series of many generations; and, in our assigned part of this mighty chain, we can only see a little way on either side of it—because from our post of observation, and with our limited range of faculties, it soon loses itself both in the obscurity that is behind, and in the almost equal obscurity that is before us. Nevertheless we concede to Him who originated the whole of this wondrous process, that His eye reaches from the beginning to the end of it—that, from the lofty and uncreated summit of His own omniscience, He can descry all the successions of the universe that Himself hath made—that in the single fiat of His power, by which the mechanism of creation was called forth, and all its laws were ordained, there were comprehended all the events that take place in the history of nature or of providence—and that neither their variety can bewilder, nor their

minuteness can elude the one glance, by which He is able to embrace all worlds, and look onward through an infinity of ages. And He doth thus foreknow, just because He did predestinate—just because in the very constitution of His work, there are the principles and the powers by which its every evolution is determined—just because the sovereignty that He hath over it, is far more absolute than that which the human artificer hath over all the operations and results of the machinery that he hath framed. It is not the only mode of conception in which we might regard the sovereignty of God, to imagine of every one event as isolated from all the others; but which still, at some period of high antiquity in the history of the Godhead, was made the subject of a distinct and authoritative ordination. There is another mode, and by which the sovereignty would still be maintained in all its entireness—even to imagine of Him, that He brought forth the universe, just as a skilful inventor bringeth forth a piece of curious and complicated workmanship; and that He furnished it at the first with all the springs and the weights and the moving forces, that fix and ascertain both the most minute and the mightiest of its evolutions; and that the wisdom by which He could frame the mechanism, is inseparable from the wisdom by which He could foresee all the particulars of its operation: And thus, just as you might say of him who maketh and who windeth up some orrery of human art, and who so is able to calculate and to predict all the consequent movements and positions of it at any point of time that may be specified—

that it is he who by his own will hath determined through each of its separate footsteps the miniature history of his own little workmanship—in like manner may you say of the great the stupendous apparatus of creation, that all the facts and the futurities of its state at every moment, are determined by Him who called it into being at the first, and endued it at the first with all its properties. We do not affirm in which of these ways it is that the affairs of the divine government are conducted; but in either way, you concede to Him who presideth over it, the entire and absolute sovereignty—in either way you realise the idea of a predestinating God.

And we seldom meet with any disposition to question this entire and unexcepted sovereignty of God, in reference to the material world. In all the operations of a purely unconscious materialism, there is abundant willingness to admit a precise necessity, a rigid and unfailing ordination. There is not a more impressive exhibition of this, than in the simple but magnificent apparatus of the visible heavens—where, out of only two forces, those enormous masses that float in boundless vacancy, have for thousands of years persevered with mathematical certainty in the courses that God hath ordained for them—insomuch, that, even by the skill of man, the mystic complexity of these shining orbs hath been most beauteously unravelled; and, sure as geometry itself, the place and the velocity and the direction of ever planet are most rigidly to be found. Now this is predestination; and it positively matters not to the question, whether the ac-

tual state of the heavens be willed by God at every one instant, or be the sure result of that invariable law which He at first impressed upon them.

And even in other departments of the material world, where the order of succeeding events hath hitherto baffled all human calculation, still it is held that there is such an order necessarily fixed by the laws of nature, or by the will of Him who hath established these laws—insomuch, that even the fluctuations of the weather are not at random; and a certain principle determines every fitful breeze, and every forming cloud, and every falling shower—though that principle hath not yet been seized upon by us, so as that we can prophesy a day of rain, just as we can prophesy the day of an eclipse. The vastness of Nature's variety, soon overpasses our feeble apprehension—yet this does not hinder our belief, that, apart from life and thought and volition, their reigns throughout the whole of its wide empire an unfailing necessity; and, supposing that there were nought but blind and unconscious materialism in the world, we should not quarrel with the doctrine of predestination. We should recognise the appointment of God as descending even to the humblest event in the history of nature—as determining the force of every billow that breaks upon the shore—as prescribing both its velocity and its path to every flying particle of dust that to our eye had been accidentally raised by some gale that blew over us—as conducting every vegetable seed to its determined spot; and so parcelling, as it were, over the soil of an uninhabited island, all the varieties of the produce

that it bore—So that it is not according to a fortuitous, but a rigidly preordained distribution of them, when we witness the trees that have arisen in one place; and the tufts of grass that abound in another; and places of rank luxuriance, where nevertheless there is not a blossom and not a stalk of herbage, that has not been set by an intelligent hand, and bidden into the very nook it occupies by that sovereign voice which assigns the bounds of every habitation.

Thus where there is nought but unconscious matter, we meet with no exception against the doctrine that God fixes all and predestines all; and that each process, however lengthened and however complicated, is overruled throughout by Him—so as that it goeth onward at every moment of time, with the sureness of mechanism: And, moreover, if, at any instant, you were to open your eyes on a landscape that had never been visited with human footstep, or rather that had never been disturbed by the spontaneous movement of any animal whatever—then it is questioned by few or by none, that the whole existing arrangement upon its surface is as it hath been ordered by the will of God; and standeth forth in all its most minute and subordinate details as He hath appointed it. Neither doth it disturb the conviction in our minds, that the influences which preside over this arrangement, or rather which actually gave rise to it, are so very complex, so very manifold, and to us so very much beyond the reach of all foresight and all calculation, that we are disposed to apply to the whole distribution of the things and objects within

our contemplation the epithet of accidental—as of the breeze which wafted the downy seed to the random situation of the plant that afterwards sprung from it; or of the stream upon which it had alighted, and which carried it down to the jutting bank that detained and harboured it; or of the capricious weather, that gave to the future vegetation the very growth that was actually experienced, and the very strength and magnitude that were actually attained. We do make a heedless application of the term accidental to all these varieties—just because they are far too complex and bewildering for us to follow them in their history, or to trace them to their causes. Yet, nevertheless, when we do summon our attention to the topic, we do not refuse that the hand of God hath been in one and all of these countless diversities—that the flower which hath found its accommodation in the crevice of the rock has had its bed prepared by Him, and that He hath planted and watered it—that over the whole face of this wilderness, there is not an hair-breadth of deviation from that very picture of it, which was in the mind of the Divinity before that He evoked it into being—that design and destiny, in fact, are imprinted, in irreversible characters, on each individual specimen of botany in this yet untrodden land—that an intelligent finger did assign the precise locality and limits of every species, so that He hath fixed their residence, and marked their borders, with all the sureness of geometry—and that, confused to our eyes as are these vast and varied assemblages which lie dispersed over some wide and solitary domain, yet, in this whole husbandry of

nature, there is positively nought that hath fallen out at random, because under the absolute superintendence of Him who hath the elements in His hand, and each of which renders in His service the precise accomplishment of that whereunto He hath sent it.

We are all abundantly willing then to admit of an entire and absolute predestination, in the world of created matter; but it is when the same doctrine is extended to the world of created mind, that we shrink and are in difficulties. For example, let this solitary island, where Nature hath so long reigned and luxuriated without a rival, at length meet the observation of the voyager, and be recovered from its deep oblivion of ages—let it now become the peopled abode, both of animals and men—let new powers and new elements be thus brought to act upon its husbandry—let the skill and the labour and the intelligence of human creatures, spread a refined agriculture over the surface of it—So as to cause another distribution of the vegetable family, from that which obtained in the days of savage and solitary grandeur. Now you will remark that the actual state of this territory is not resolvible into the operation of physical causes alone; but is the mingled result of the physical blended with the moral—that the former influences, which wont to operate by themselves, are now complicated with other influences still more capricious, or at least still less within the reach of calculation—that human thought and human choice now share an influence, over that arrangement which before was determined by the elements of nature. Now

what the predestinarian holds is, that the determination is just as precise and as necessary, after the accession of this new influence as it was before —that though living creatures have taken possession of the territory, yet that all its changes and all its processes are just as rigidly and as absolutely as ever under the sovereignty of God—that, in the dispersion of plants for example, the flying bird carries the seed to its destined spot with as great sureness, as it could be wafted there by the breeze of heaven—that the hoof of the unwieldy quadruped is as surely guided to crush the vegetation which God meaneth to be destroyed, as are those invisible particles that float through the atmosphere, and are made to fall in blight or in mildew on those fields which they have spotted with disease—that when the skipping deer hath dibbled by his foot a soft receptacle for the falling acorn, the law of gravitation hath not more determinately guided the one in a strict rectilineal path to that place, whence the magnificent oak of many centuries is to arise, than the law of animal nature hath brought the other with all its light and airy and tremulous motion to be the unconscious auxiliary therein. Hitherto then all is destiny; and even when we pass upwardly to the doings of conscious and intelligent man, the sturdy predestinarian will not quit his hold; but affirms, that, even after the introduction of this new element, all is in as strict subordination to the will of God as before—that though the now cleared and cultivated farms, and the well-kept gardens, and the beauteous shrubbery of rising villas, and all the comforts and ornaments

of civilized life which grace the transformed landscape—that though these form a different picture of the island from that which we have imagined of it many generations before—Yet that the picture now, was in the mind of the Divinity before the creation of the world, as correctly and as vividly as the picture of it then—that He did not lose sight of it, when it passed from the operation of His own unconscious elements into the hands and the busy management of His own living, nay even of His own planning and purposing and rational creatures—that even then, it did not pass beyond the scope of God's prescience and of God's predetermination—that men are as certainly the instruments of His pleasure, as the fire and the air and the water that are said to be His ministers—Insomuch, that, in the glowing domains of art and population, every item of the perspective which is afforded, realised though it hath been by the busy hearts and hands of human beings, was also all settled and made sure in the counsels of eternity.

And it does give a semblance of great consistency and truth to this whole speculation—that, just as matter acts in virtue of certain powers and properties wherewith the Creator hath endowed it, so mind also hath powers and properties to which all its movements can be referred—and, more especially, that the part which man takes in the husbandry of the ground, may as distinctly be traced to the operation of a law in his nature, as the part which the elements have can be traced to certain fixed and unalienable principles, according to which they act on the physiology of the vegetable world.

It is the Maker of all things who hath given to each of them its own peculiar characteristic, according to which each moves in its own peculiar and characteristic way. It is He, in particular, who hath adapted the economy of man's frame to the fruits of the earth; and who goads him on by the ever-recurring appetite of hunger; and who, making him wiser than the fowls of heaven, hath given to him a reach of anticipation through all the seasons of the year; and who hath enabled him to treasure up the experience of the past; and who hath supplied him with principles on which he can calculate and select and determine according to circumstances, and fix himself down in the abode of his settlement and on the field of his industry. And with these busy processes of choice and deliberation and the agency of motives, doth God, not only decide the greater movements of his life, but in reality fills up all the subordinate details of it. And thus when man goeth forth unto his labour, he is all day long the creature of circumstances; and the soil, and the grain, and the exposure, and the local convenience, and the right successions for a profitable husbandry, and the facilities that may be opened, and the obstacles that must be overcome—these act upon him as so many effective considerations every hour of the day, and they necessarily guide and influence him even through the minutest details of his agriculture. And it is thus that we may detect a real process in his part of the operation, as well as in the operation of the unconscious elements—a series of causes and effects, by which the instrument man is directed in the

husbandry of art, along with all the other instruments that without him carried forward the husbandry of nature—an actual and a firm concatenation of influences, by which he is guided to all his plans and all his performances, and which descends to every furrow that he draws, and every field that he incloses, and every handful of corn that he strews upon its surface. And thus it is that in the opinion, we shall not say of theologians only, but even of those who are profoundest in philosophy, the intervention of man is not conceived to affect the predestination of God—the creature is regarded as but an instrument in the hand of the Creator, which He wieldeth at His pleasure—the mechanism of thought and desire and determination is held to be only one of those countless diversities of operation, through which it is God that worketh all in all. And, accordingly, it is the article of many a philosopher's as well as of many a theologian's creed, that the newly acquired features of the now cultivated island, were, one and all of them, in the perspective of God from the beginning—nay that it is the hand of God Himself which hath imprinted them all upon the face of the altered landscape—that with man, as the tool by which His own designs are carried into effect, every hedge-row hath been drawn, and every acre hath been reclaimed, and every edifice hath been raised, and one definite space hath been pencilled over with sweetest verdure, and another made to wave in foliage, and another to shine forth in flowery decoration, and another left in Nature's untamed luxuriance; but altogether, so as that with the

agency of man, He hath as effectually imprest His own design and His own destination upon the whole of this territory, as when without this agency He had nothing but His own passive and unconscious elements to work by.

Thus far have we deemed it necessary, in justice to a topic, which, in the ordinary course of our lecturing, hath come in our way, to say something on the much controverted doctrine of predestination—Yet, while we do not hesitate to affirm that all our convictions are upon its side, such is our antipathy to any thing like mere speculation in the pulpit, that we are glad to dispose in half an hour of an argument, that would require a lengthened and elaborate treatise for the full solution of it. The particular illustration that we have chosen, is not perhaps the most effective for the purpose of convincing—yet we have preferred it, because we think it the best that has occurred to us, for elucidating all the particular uses that stand connected with this article of faith. These we shall defer till a future opportunity; and, meanwhile, we shall barely advert to one argument more, that, even apart from Scripture, (which according to my own view is altogether on the side of predestination,) but that even apart from Scripture, might we think be most triumphantly alleged in its behalf.

The argument is, that, by admitting of predestination in the world of matter, and excluding it from the world of mind, you, in fact, exclude God from the most dignified part of His own creation. While you invest Him with an entire and unex

cepted supremacy over the mass of unconscious bodies, you rifle Him of His authority over the moral and the intelligent empire of spirits—Nay, by erecting each of these spirits into a principle of spontaneous and independent operation, the capricious movements of which God can neither predict nor predetermine, you lay open by far the noblest department of the universe, to an anarchy that no power can control, and no wisdom can foretell the issues of. He who hath made, and who sustains all things, is represented as standing by, unable to foresee the turns, or to direct the transitions of all those random and unaccountable processes, that are now in the hands of His own creatures; and, let the plans and wishes of the Divine Mind have been what they may, there is nought in providence and nought in history that is sure. It is but a poor compensation that He presides over the motions of a sublime astronomy. It is but a poor compensation that the winds and the vapours, and the tides of ocean, and the changes of the atmosphere, and even all the processes of the vegetable kingdom—save when the usurper man hath wrested them from his grasp—It is but a poor compensation, that both the mechanism of the heavens above, and the whole of terrestrial physics on the earth below, are at His absolute disposal,—if He be thus dethroned from His ascendancy over the best and the fairest region of His works; and if, when once the elements of thought and life and will are caused to mingle their influence with other things, He, from that moment, is struck with impotency, and must suffer the progress of events to take its own fortuitous and un-

manageable way. This consideration obtains great additional strength, when we recur to the undoubted experience which I lately insisted on—even on the might and the magnitude of little things, in regard to their bearing on the grandest passages of history; and that therefore if God be wrested of His power and His providence in that which is least, you, in fact dethrone Him from His sovereignty over that which is greatest. You remember the example that we gave from a very critical passage in the life of Mahomet—how he was preserved by the flight of a bird, and by the rapid process of inference which this gave rise to in the minds of his pursuers; and that, had it not been for these two steps in the concatenations of providence, all the designs of the impostor would have been arrested: And one of the greatest moral revolutions in the history of our species was thus made to turn on the most minute and familiar of all incidents. The doctrine that would limit the predestinations of God to the world of matter, might allow that it was He who hollowed the cave in which the pretender hid himself; and guarded its entrance with shrubbery; and perhaps even detained the bird for the purpose of turning away the footsteps of the destroyers: But one step remains, and that hath been placed by the assertors of a self-determining power in man beyond the reach of the Being from whom he sprung. It all hinged, you will observe, on a rapid volition in the breast of the murderers. And if there be any thing there to abridge God of His sovereignty—if when it be the part of man to will, it is the part of God as it were

to stand by and to wait on the uncertain decision—if the Creator, instead of foreseeing all and determining all, must thus attend on the decisions of the creature; and shape the measures of His providence on earth, according to the signals that are given out by all the petty and independent powers that swarm upon its surface—Then never, in the whole history of this world's politics we will venture to affirm, never was there exhibited a more disjointed and tumultuous government—never have we read of a more helpless or degraded sovereign.

LECTURE LXI.

ROMANS, viii, 29, 30

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

In my last remarks upon the subject I confined myself, nakedly and absolutely, to the truth of the doctrine of predestination; and had no time left for any moral or practical application. And yet it is for a good and powerful application of the truth in this instance that I feel greatly more anxious, than even for the truth itself. It is not your curiosity, but your conscience that I want to address; neither am I so solicitous for dogmatising you into a right belief on the topic of predestination, as for evincing that, whether true or false, all your present energies should be given entire to the present work of repenting, and believing, and labouring with all diligence in the new obedience of the gospel. As to the speculative doctrine itself, I do not scruple to aver, that, while a firm and unexcepted believer in it myself, I do not regard it as one of those articles which are indispensable to salvation—that many are the eminent worthies, and more especially of our sister church, who have the root of the matter in them; and yet who eye this doctrine, not with incredulity alone, but with a sort of keen and sen-

sitive antipathy—who have, in short, a kind of horror at this most revolting feature of what they denominate a rigid and revolting Calvinism; and deem, that, unfit for modern ears, it should now be suffered to be forgotten in the unwieldy folio, whose scowling frontispiece fitly represents the theologian who penned it. I, of course, hold them to be wrong. I think that they misunderstand the subject, and view it through a medium of passion and prejudice which may at length be dispersed. Nevertheless, though we count them in an error, it, like certain sins mentioned by the apostle John, is an error not unto death. I do not see how they can get over the evidence that there is for predestination—both in the Scriptures of truth; and in those independent reasonings to which man, even unaided and alone, seems altogether competent. Yet I am aware, that, to a certain limit, there may be varieties of opinion, and all of them alike consistent with reverence for God and His communications, so far as the ability to understand them has been given; and such varieties on the much controverted topic of predestination appear to me within that limit. So that it is not in the spirit of Athanasian intolerance, that I have hitherto urged my convictions upon this subject; nor indeed so much with a view to impress these convictions, as to demonstrate if I can—that the great cause of practical Christianity remains uninjured by a doctrine, which is conceived by many to be fatal to it.

The apostle Paul, however strenuous and resolute in his assertion of certain doctrines, was, in regard to certain others, the most indulgent and

liberal of men. He admitted a certain latitude of sentiment even among his own converts; and, though there were errors for which he had no toleration, yet there were also errors, both in opinion and in practice, which he regarded in the spirit of a most benignant forbearance. There were articles of faith, on which he would not give place even to the slightest mitigation of them—no not for a single hour; and when the apostle Peter offered something like a compromise with the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. Nay he called down the imprecation of Heaven on any who should pervert the mind of his disciples from that gospel of free grace, wherewith he linked the whole of a sinner's salvation; and yet, while there were truths respecting Jesus Christ and Him crucified which he could not surrender, there were also truths in which he suffered a variety of conception on the part of his fellow-Christians; and so far from scowling excommunication upon them because of it, he waited in hope and charity the progress of a more enlightened conviction in their minds. "Let as many as be perfect be thus minded, and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things." This he would not have said of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. This, for aught that is known, he might have said of the doctrine of predestination. And it is sufficiently remarkable that the apostle Peter adverts to certain things of Paul, not as indispensable to be be-

lieved, but what is far more characteristic of our present topic as hard to be understood—a topic that has met us on our way, and which it were surely unworthy of the fearless believer in the authority of Scripture to decline from; but a topic which we at the same time entertain, not with the purpose to regale your curiosity, but if possible to stimulate your conscience—not to make intelligible that which an inspired teacher hath pronounced to be dark—not to make you more learned in this redoubted dogma than the Bible is fitted to make its humble interpreters and scholars, but to save if possible, to save the unlearned and the unstable from wresting this and the other scriptures to their own destruction.

I have already stated that the doctrine of the text might be apprehended by a series of historical events—each linked in firm and necessary concatenation with the other, and altogether forming a chain which extends from the first purpose of the Divine Mind to the final accomplishment of it in eternity. The intermediate place at which each of us now stands forms one of these links. It is a step of that mighty progression which reaches from everlasting to everlasting, and of whose distant extremities we are in profoundest ignorance. We may know that there is a primary decree, either for or against us; but of the decree itself we know nothing. We may know that there is a fixed destination in reserve for us; but which term of the dread alternative between heaven and hell is to be realized on our imperishable spirits, of this we have no information. We see but a little way on either

side of us; and from the visible place where we now stand, each in the chain of his own personal destiny, does it soon lose itself, both behind and before, in a dim and distant obscurity which we cannot penetrate. And the question that I have to address to every plain understanding is, whether we shall be guided in the business that is now before us by that which we do know, or by that which we do not know—whether by our fancies of that which lies in a conjectural region away from us, or by our findings of that which is at hand—whether by our vague speculation on the first and the last steps of that process which connects the pre-ordination of God with the future eternity of man, or by those steps in which we now are actually implicated, the near and the besetting certainties of our own present condition. For, let it be observed, that there are such urgent and immediate certainties in your state as it now is; and the question is, shall you proceed upon these, or upon the far-fetched imaginations which you choose to draw from a territory that is fathomless and unknown? A fool's eyes, says Solomon, are abroad over all the ends of the earth; and we appeal to common sense —whether it be practical wisdom or practical folly, to guide your footsteps by the uncertain guesses of what God hath written regarding you in the book of His decrees, or by what He hath written for your present direction in the book of His revelation. Grant that I am moving along a chain which hath one end certainly fixed in the eternity that is past, and another as certainly fixed in the eternity that is to follow. The movement of this day, at least,

depends on the few links that are within the reach of your present observation. It is not by looking distantly aback, neither is it by shooting your perspective ahead of all that is visible before you, it is not thus that you are practically carried forward on the line of your history as an immortal being—it is by the links that are presently in hand that your present route is determined—it is to these that you have to look—it is upon the realities within your grasp that you are to decide the enquiry, what shall I do; and not upon the visions that float before the eye of your imagination. And what are these realities? What are the matters on hand, that we would have you substitute in place of the speculations about things beyond our reach, and things at a distance? There is an embassy of peace from heaven at your door. There is the truth of the Godhead staked to the fulfilment of your salvation, if you will only rely upon Him. There is His beseeching voice addressed to each and to all, and saying "Come now let us reason together." There is the free offer of forgiveness, and what is more, the assurance that if you will only turn unto God He will pour out His Spirit upon you. These are the matters on hand. This is the business to which I should like to recall you; and would rather quash all your thoughts on the topic of predestination as so many hurtful vagaries, than that the urgencies of a free gospel should be held in abeyance. If you are not able to see the consistency of this doctrine with the plain declarations and entreaties of the New Testament, do not bewilder yourselves. Misspend not that precious time in fruitless cogita-

tion, which should be employed in proceeding upon the calls of repent and believe and be reconciled unto God. Put away from you the doubtful disputations, and give your busy entertainment to the honest assurances of the gospel. Be content with your ignorance of higher mysteries, and forthwith enter on the open walk of reconciliation—being very sure, that, whatever doubt or darkness may have gathered around the loftier summits of Theology, it hath also its safe and its patent road for the humble wayfarer—that it has an offered pardon which you cannot too confidently trust, that it has its revealed hopes of glory which you cannot too joyfully cherish, that it has its promises of salvation which none of you can too surely or too speedily embrace, that it has its prescribed path of holiness which you cannot too diligently walk in.

You remember the illustration that I have already given upon this subject, when I endeavoured to show how the doctrine of predestination could be exemplified in the processes of nature and of history—not only holding an unquestioned sway over inanimate things, and stamping a precise necessity both on the simpler movements of the heavens above, and the more complicated operations that take place in the physics and the physiology of the earth below; but, even when man mingles his energies and volitions with the unconscious elements as he does in the plans and proceedings of husbandry—that, then too, there is as sure a presiding sovereignty, which determines the site of every plant, and fixes the condition of every spot of territory, as if nought but the winds and the waters,

these unconscious ministers of the Divinity, were in play. But, granting this to be a true speculation, will it ever warp the designs and the doings of the practical agriculturist? Does he ever think of the predestination that runs through all his busy processes, or is it necessary that he should? Did ever in this world's history a party of colonists tread on some before untrodden shore and begin its cultivation, under the impulse of such a metaphysical speculation? Did the notion of God's prescience and of God's preordination extending to every movement, supply one element of influence or direction in a single choice that they made, or a single labour that they put their hand to? It might be true, that every resulting farm, with its fields and its crops and its bounderies, emerged, after the busy willing and working of many years, into the very state that had been pictured in the Divine Mind from all eternity—yet the truth never, for a single instant, be present to the mind of a single operator in this process. He was set agoing by other considerations. He is decided by other influences. He never vaults so high as to the first determinations of the Almighty. He never looks so far as to the remote transformation that the surface of the territory on which he now labours is to undergo. He is moved both to will and to do by nearer elements—by the nature of the soil that is under his feet—by the present weather which is around him, and which calls him forth to his toils —by the promises of a climate, that experience has told him warrants the hope of a recompence for his labours. There is nought of predestination in all

his thoughts. He may exemplify the doctrine, but he does not recognise it; nor is it at all essential to the practical result of a domain now rich in all the fruits of a prosperous agriculture. It is the very same in spiritual husbandry. It is the very same in that process, by which souls, now dead in trespasses and sins, are turned into well-watered gardens. It is a transformation that may be effected, without one thought being bestowed, or one intelligent regard being once cast, on this sublime mystery. The mind is decided by nearer and more effective contemplations—by the voice of a beseeching God—by the view of an open door of Mediatorship to His throne—by the tidings of peace even to the worst of sinners, through the blood of a satisfying atonement; and by the honest and affectionate urgency wherewith these tidings are pressed upon the acceptance of you all—by the promises of a spiritual climate, now rendered fit for the transformation of sinners, these thorns and briars, into trees of righteousness; for living water is made to descend on the prayers of every believer, the Holy Ghost being given because Christ is now glorified. Let these obvious considerations be plainly and obviously proceeded on; and, whether you have settled the high topic of predestination or not—be very sure, that he who strives to enter in at the strait gate shall save his own soul, that he who presses into the kingdom of heaven shall take it by force.

If the doctrine of predestination be true, as I believe it to be, then it extends to all the processes of human life; and, in virtue of it, every career of human exertion hath its sure result, and must ter-

minate in one certain fulfilment that is absolute and irreversible. It is not the state of your future eternity alone, that is decided by it; but the state of your fortune and family in this world. Are you entering upon business for example? If this doctrine be true, even as I think it to be, the wealth to be realised, the height of affluence to be gained, the precise sum to be bequeathed as an inheritance to your children, are fixed and immutable as if already written in the book of destiny. Now attend to what that is which you take your motive from, when you actively engage in the pursuits and speculations of merchandise. Do you ever think of fetching it from the predestination that has been already made in the upper sanctuary? What is it that sets you so busily agoing? Is it the predestination that is past, and which has its place in heaven? or is it the prospect which lies immediately before you, and which is furnished both by the present realities and the future likelihoods that be on the field of your earthly contemplations? Does the argument that all is already determined, and there is no object to be gained by the most strenuous forth-putting of activity on your part—does ever this paralyse or impede any of your movements? Practically and really, I would ask, do you not resign yourselves as fully to what may be called the operation of the *contiguous inducements*, as if there was no predestination—as if this were a work that you had never heard of, or a conception that never had been presented to your thoughts? There is no such lofty or aerial speculation that is ever permitted to embarrass this part at least of

your history; and, what is more, no complaint of hardship is ever uttered by you—because the affairs of your worldly business are all chained down in adamantine necessity. The thought of this fated necessity as to this world's business, will neither provoke nor will it paralyse you—provided that you could only see a good and a likely opening for the prosecution of it. You will instantly forget the abstract speculation, and enter with all the busy ardour of intense and unrestrained faculties on the path of action. Give you only a hopeful enterprise—give you credit, and the countenance of steady and powerful friends, when you embark upon it—give you the assurance of rising markets, and of a demand that will speedily absorb all the commodities which, either by purchase or by preparation, you can assemble together for the purpose of pouring into them—And then, only think of the impetuous contempt wherewith you would overleap the paltry obstacle, if, in the midst of all this glee and animating hurry, one of your cool metaphysical acquaintances should offer to arrest you on the path of fortune, by the assurance that fortune and every thing else had already a decree of predestination laid upon them. You would no more think of giving up because of this, than you would think of regulating the history of your present day by what you read of history before the flood. And certain it is of all the operations of commerce, which, if predestination be indeed true, are as much within the iron grasp of fatality as any other of our concerns; that still these are as much the spontaneous doings of busy active plodding and locomotive

creatures, as if there was no such doctrine at all; and that, in respect of the calculations and the correspondencies and the bargains and the voyages and all the other processes that obtain in the world of trade—the doctrine, which some conceive would freeze the whole into apathy and lay upon it a sudden congelation, leaves the affairs of human beings precisely on the footing in which it found them.

It is just so in all the other processes of human life. It is so, for example, in the education and settlement of children. If the doctrine in question be true—then every footstep, and every advancement, and the whole train of the future history of each, are already the subjects of a prior and unfailing ordination. But does this encumber the activity and the outlook, even of those parents who are of sturdiest and most inflexible Calvinism? In the whole plan and conduct of their proceedings in behalf of their own offspring, it is still the operation of the contiguous inducements that sets them practically agoing. No one ever thinks of fetching one consideration to guide or to influence him, from that period of remoteness and mystery when God made His decrees; but all the influence which tells upon them, cometh from the circumstances that are immediately around them, or from the probabilities that are immediately before their eyes. Give a parent an accessible place of best scholarship for some rising member of his family—give him a likely avenue to some office of emolument or honour—give him a promising line of business, a promise too that he reads not in the book of heaven's ordinations but in the book of earth's common and every-day experi-

ence—give him these; and predestination will no more affect either the direction or the activity of his movements, than any category of the old schoolmen. It may be a truth, and he may believe it as such; but never does he suffer it to bewilder him away from the plain course, on which wisdom and observation and a sense of interest have urged him to enter—and on that course, do we see him plying all his expedients, as if God had decreed nothing, and as if man had to do every thing. All that he needs to put him into motion is an opening towards which he may turn him, and along which he will be guided just by the events which cast up—just by the circumstances and things that meet his observation. Such an opening in trade will at once make of him an aspiring and indefatigable merchant. Such an opening in family politics will at once set him, under the stimulus of his parental affection, to do all and to devise all for the future provision of his offspring. Such an opening in near or distant colonies will, under the powerful operation of interest, bring out capital and skill and personal activity, and make him a busy agriculturist. Predestination may, or it may not, have stamped a rigid and inviolable necessity on each and on all of these processes; but whether the one or the other it matters not to him, who is directly, and personally engaged in them. He gives himself up to the play of those motives by which he is immediately beset; and under which he is powerfully urged forward on that course of activity, where he strives for his object, and where he carries it.

It is even so in the business of religion. Pre-

destination no more locks up the activities of this business than of any other, and no more lays a hurt or a hardship on those who are engaged in it. We never hear of the merchant or the parent or the agriculturist, complaining that all his energies are bound fast by a decree; but we see them instantly set in motion by a good opening. Neither ought we to hear such a complaint from the adventurer for heaven, provided only that he too is presented with a good opening. His proper and practical concern, is, not with the decree at all that is behind him, but with the opening that is before him. It is with the gate of Christ's mediatorship, now flung back for his access to the throne of God, and with the voice of invitation that issues therefrom. It is with the call, "cease to do evil, learn to do well." It is with the honest assurance, that, if we return unto God, God will return unto us and abundantly pardon us. It is with the proclamation of welcome to one and to all; and, lest you should feel yourself secluded by the doctrine of election, it is with such terms as all and any and whosoever—terms that both embrace all and point specifically to each, and by which therefore an obliterating sponge should be made to pass over the hurtful and the withering imagination. These are what you have immediately to do with; and with the question of your name being in the book of life, I speak unto those who meditate the great transition on which hingeth the whole of their future eternity, with this question at present they have positively nothing to do. The marchant would not so embarrass himself—his love of gain would urge him forward to the opening.

The parent would not so embarrass himself—the love of his children would urge him in like manner to take the practicable opening. Neither would the agriculturist—his love of a prosperous settlement would lead him instantly to seize upon the goodly opening. And if an opening goodlier than them all—if the plain and practicable path to which you are cheered forward by the invitation of Heaven, and along which you have the guarantee of Heaven's grace and Heaven's promises to assure you of a harvest of glory—If this be not enough to arouse you from indolent speculation—if this do not break you loose from metaphysical difficulties, as from the entanglement of so many cobwebs—The inference, we fear, is too obvious to be resisted—that barrier over which the love of gain, or the impulse of natural affection, so easily forced its way, hath withstood the impotent efforts of the religionist; for he had not the love of God or of holiness that would have carried him over it, and this is his condemnation that he loved the darkness rather than the light because his deeds were evil.

There are innumerable successive links in the chain of your destiny, and it is only a few of the greater ones that are adverted to in the text. The first of all is coeval with the foreknowledge and predestination of God. With this you have nothing at present to do. God at that time was alone, and what He then did is one of those secret things which belong unto Himself. The second link is the call that He addresses to you: 'Whom he hath predestinated them he also called.' With this you have to do. God at this part of the series is not alone.

He makes a forthgoing of Himself to the sinner. There is now a converse between Him and you; and the particulars of this converse are among the revealed things which belong to yourselves and to your children. By this call He points out the opening through which you may escape from the coming wrath, through which you enter upon friendship with the God whom you have offended. To this then I would solicit your attention; and I warn you, that, with the dark and unknown territory which lies behind this actual communication from heaven to earth, you have positively no more at present to do, than with the territory that lies beyond the confines of our planetary system. The matter in hand is the call. It is the widely sounding proclamation of "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved." It is the assurance of a welcome and a good-will lifted from the mercy-seat, and made to circulate at large among all the families of the world. It is the good news of a propitiation, the blood of which cleanseth from all sin; and of a Spirit ready to be poured on the returning penitent, that it may both actuate the holy desire and uphold his footsteps in the way of holy obedience. And the truth of God is staked to the fulfilment of all these declarations. He hath so framed the economy of the gospel, that if you simply trust—then either you are saved or God is a liar. He hath indeed descended very far, that He might again make up the controversy between Himself and a sinful world. He bids one and all of us only put Him to the trial. "Prove me, prove me" says God "and see whether I will not pour out a

blessing upon you." "Plead your cause with me and put me in mind of my own promises." "Take with you words and turn to the Lord, say unto him Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously. I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely for mine anger is turned away." It is not with God, shrouded in the depths of His past eternity—it is not with God, in that era of high and remote antiquity, where all His footsteps are unsearchable—it is not with God in the secrecy of those unrevealed counsels by which He fixes the destiny of all worlds, that you have to do. You have no right to intrude into these mysteries of the Royal Presence, and you should count it enough, if you are included in the benefits of a Royal Proclamation; and you are positively left without one shadow of complaint—now that God hath broken silence—now that He hath set Himself forth in that most winning and impressive attitude of God waiting to be gracious—now that He stands before you like a Parent bereaved of His children, and longing for them back again. And now that it is God beseeching you to be reconciled, and God entreating your acceptance of His mercy, and God importunately plying you with the offers of pardon and the calls of repentance, and God swearing by Himself that He hath no pleasure in your death but rather that one and all should come unto Him and live—now it is with Him and with Him only that you have really and practically to do.

I can tell you nothing about the first link; but I am just fulfilling the duties of my office, when I bid you lay hold of the second. I know not aught

of the individual predestination of any of you; but I do most assuredly know that each of you is the fit and legitimate subject for an individual call. I therefore do most freely and unreservedly call you. If you respond thereunto with the question, But is not there only a certain number set apart for salvation and what may that number be? I know not how I can better reply than after the example of Jesus Christ, when asked Were there many that should be saved? He gave no countenance to the speculative interrogation, and simply bade the man look to himself. "Strive you to enter in at the strait gate." In like manner do I say Strive you to make your calling and election sure. I am not able to trace the chain of your destiny backward. But here is one link of it, the call; and could I gain your compliance with the call, could I get you to close with the chain at this part of it—then I can pursue it with certainty forward; and, in fullest confidence that he who is called is also justified and that he who is justified is also glorified, I, in darkness though I be about the secrets of the book of life, could read in the book of your own visible history in the world your destination to the glories of an everlasting inheritance.

Let me beseech you then to take yourselves plainly and practically to that revealed opening, through which all who will might find egress from death unto life. Suffer not ought to suspend this transition. Cease now your hands from disobedience; and submit now your hearts to that grace, which never is withheld from those who truly and desirously seek after it. Give speculation with all

its doubts and difficulties to the wind, rather than that another moment should elapse, ere you give entertainment to the free overtures of the gospel, and render a full and a resolved compliance therewith. Christ knocketh at the door of every heart; and let that knock be first answered, ere you feel yourselves at leisure or at liberty for the controversies of an argument that has baffled many, and that never should be permitted to detain or to embarrass you—whilst so urgent an interest, as that of your salvation, is still in dependence. The question, my brethren, is not Am I by election one of the saved? but the question is What shall I do to be saved? This is the first question, and your highest wisdom is simply to adjourn the other; and when pressed upon you so as to interrupt your progress on the plain way of a plain Christian, then do as they do in Parliament, when they want to dispose of a topic, or rather to dismiss it from their deliberations—move the previous question, or proceed to the order of the day. It is a most idle expenditure of thought and energy that many do lavish upon predestination; and if carried to the length of elbowing out the faith and repentance of the gospel, it is worse than idle, it is ruinous. It finds you on the ground of alienation from God; and, if it take up the room that belongs to the plain matters of salvation, it will leave you there. It is not your orthodoxy on this point that will prepare you for heaven. Nay it may only train you for the companionships of hell, for some of the employments that are carried on there, for converse with infernal spirits who have gone before you,

> "And now apart sit on a hill retired,
> In thoughts more elevate and reason high
> Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
> Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
> And find no end in wandering mazes lost."

Next to that of being called is the step of our being justified, and next to that of being justified is the step of our being glorified. There are some who feel as if here a vacancy had been left in the sense that needs to be filled up, and they would interpose between two of these terms the step of our being sanctified—making the whole to run thus, 'Whom He did predestinate them He also called, and whom He called them He also justified, and whom He justified them He also sanctified, and whom He sanctified them He also glorified.' Now this is as good as done, though not so as to sustain a continued order of enumeration. The called in a former verse are designed to be those who love God; and indeed this affection springs directly in the bosom of the complying sinner, after that he hath acceded to the offers of peace and pardon which are addrest to him in the gospel. And what perhaps is stronger still—the predestination that is spoken of fixes all the intermediate steps, as well as the final and the glorious consummation; and, more expressly, does it settle and make sure—that all who are the objects of it should be conformed to the image of Christ. It is thus that virtue here is made the indispensable stepping-stone to glory hereafter. It is thus that a doctrine, misconceived by many as superseding the need of holiness and of all exertion after it, supplies the strongest urg-

encies upon its side—by giving us to know, that a moral excellence, like unto the Saviour's, forms part of the invariable order, which lies between the primary ordination and the final blessedness of all who are redeemed by Him. The consistent predestinarian knows, that every step in the series of a believer's history, is as irrevocably sure as is its termination; and it is not for him of all men, to break up the alliance between holiness in time and happiness in eternity. To obtain the happiness, I must have the holiness; and, wanting the one on earth, I shall never reach the other in heaven. There is nought, we have affirmed already, in the doctrine, that should avert the eye of the enquirer from the call of the gospel; and there is nought, we affirm now, in the doctrine, that should exempt him who hath accepted of the call from the earnest prosecution of its holiness. Nay, it tells him more impressively than ever, that it cannot be dispensed with—that there is a necessity, as rigorous as fate, for its being and for its power in the person of every believer—that, wanting it, he is altogether out of the way of a blessed eternity—and that, having it, his calling and his election are sure.

This doctrine then does not affect the business in hand. It should neither deafen upon the sinner's ear the gospel call of reconciliation—nor should it slacken, but rather stimulate to the uttermost, all his incentives to obedience. The direct work of Christianity, either with or without predestination, abideth as before; and unable, as I have been from unlooked-for circumstances, to pursue this topic even through the whole extent of its useful and

practical applications—my main design is fulfilled, if it no longer stand as a stumbling-block in the way either of your firmly trusting in God, or of your diligently doing good in His service.

More particularly, the doctrine leaves the question of your preparation for the Sacrament,[1] on precisely the same footing as before. It fixes what must be your character in time, as well as what must be your condition in eternity. It stamps its own irreversibleness on the truth, that grace here must go before glory hereafter; and it is not, my brethren, on the strength of your fancied predestination, but on the strength of your felt and your present holiness, that you infer yourselves to be among the people of God—who might now share in the ordinances of His church, and might afterwards look for admission into the festivities of His paradise. Do then examine yourselves, not by what hath taken place in heaven before you, but by what now you feel and know to be within you. I do not ask what are your attainments; but I at least ask what are your purposes? Is it your desire to be conformed unto the image of Christ? Under the conscious load of imperfection that is upon you, are you weary of sin, and is it your heart's earnest longing to be translated into the element of sacredness? Have you resolved to give up all that you know to be evil; and breaking loose from the companionships of the world, is it your determination to come out from among them, and to touch not the unclean thing, but give your-

[1] Probably preached on a Sunday before the Sacramental Sabbath.

selves singly to the invitation and service of that Master—who, without bar or hindrance, is willing to receive you all, and be a Father to you all? These are the plain questions, on which the step of your worthy communion is suspended; and be very sure, that, if fit for this act of fellowship with the saints on earth, you are fit and on full march, to the high joys and the holy exercises of the sanctuary that is above.

I conclude with an extract from the commentary of Archbishop Leighton on Peter, of which I know not whether to admire most—the exquisite skill, or the exquisite beauty, of his deliverance on this whole topic. But it will require your attention to follow it. It is one of his paragraphs on this verse, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." "Now," he says, "the connection of these we are for our profit to take notice of, that effectual calling is inseparably tied to this eternal foreknowledge or election on the one side, and salvation on the other. These two links of the chain are up in heaven in God's own hand; but this middle one is let down on earth into the hearts of His children, and they, laying hold on it, have sure hold on the other two—for no power can sever them; if therefore they can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, these are the counterparts of the golden characters of His love, in which their names are written in the book of life. Their believing writes their names under the promises of the revealed book of life, the Scriptures; and so ascertains them, that the same names are in

the secret book of life that God hath by Himself from eternity. So finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the fountain whence it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns —yet they know that it hath its source, and shall return, to that ocean which ariseth from their eternal election, and shall empty itself into that eternity of happiness and salvation."

"Hence" he adds "much joy ariseth to the believer. This tie is indissoluble as the agents are, the Father the Son and the Spirit; so are election and vocation and sanctification and justification and glory. Therefore, in all conditions, believers may, from the sense of the working of the Spirit in them, look back to that election, and forward to that salvation. But they that remain unholy and disobedient, have as yet no evidence of this love; and therefore, cannot, without vain presumptions and self-delusions, judge thus of themselves, that they are within the peculiar love of God. But in this let the righteous be glad, and let them shout for joy all that are upright in heart.

"If election, effectual calling, and salvation be inseparably linked together—then by any one of them, a man may hold upon all the rest, and may know that his hold is sure; and this is the way wherein we may attain, and ought to secure that comfortable assurance of the love of God." "Find then but within thee sanctification by the Spirit; and this argues necessarily both justification by the Son, and election by God the Father."

The Spirit will be given to your prayers, and to your endeavours. Here is your opening; and it lies with yourselves to enter it.

LECTURE LXII.

ROMANS, viii, 31, 32.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

VER. 31. 'What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us?'

In this verse the apostle makes a special application of what he had said immediately before to himself and his disciples. 'What shall we say to these things?' What inference shall we draw for ourselves from this train of reasoning? He takes encouragement from it you will observe. It is both to him and to his followers a cheering contemplation, which it only could have been on the presumption that they had part and interest in that election of which he had spoken already, and to which he afterwards recurs in the course of his argument. 'If God be for us who can be against us?'—is a consideration that stands obviously allied in the mind of the apostle, with the question of Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? He must have believed then in his own election, and that of the converts whom he addresses; or, if he did not know it as a certainty, he at least grasps at it as he would at a strong and pretty confident probability. Now how is it that any man arrives at this conclusion? And while all have a warrant to

rejoice in that offer of salvation which in fact is universal—while any of our world may look unto Him who is set forth, as a propitiation for the world's sins and be lightened thereby—while each and every of our species may respond unto the gift of eternal life, that is held out for the acceptance of as many as will; and may, without let or hindrance, draw nigh and touch that sceptre of forgiveness which now hath been made to stand forth in the sight of the whole human family—while thus it is, that all without exception are invited to take comfort in that redeeming love which prompted God to send His Son into the world, that whosoever receiveth Him might along with Him receive peace and pardon and reconciliation—Whence comes this peculiarity in the case of Paul and of his correspondents, that they here take comfort, not in the redeeming, but in the electing love—that they indulge in strains of gratitude not because of the part they have in that book of revelation which circulates at large among mankind and is addressed unto all, but because of the part they have in that book of life where the names of the blest have been enrolled from before the foundation of the world—not because they have been spoken to in that language of welcome, which under the economy of the gospel, hath gone forth among the sinners of all degrees and of every denomination; but because they have been singled out as the objects of a favoured and friendly destination, that was coeval with the first purpose of the Eternal Mind, and reaches from everlasting to everlasting?

This is an assurance which they, and which no

man, can gather from a direct perusal of those secrets that are written in the book of destiny. This is a book which is never unsealed to the eye of any mortal here below. Paul, and his brethren in the church, had access to none other truths than those which are made accessible to all in the book of God's testimony to the world. They simply dealt with the matters of that book, just as I would have you to deal with them. They made the plain and the practicable use of all that is revealed in the preceding chapters of this epistle, before they felt themselves on the vantage-ground whence they could pour forth the utterances of confidence and joy, wherewith the apostle brings the present chapter to its triumphant conclusion. They felt the conviction of their own sinfulness, and this I would labour that you might be convinced of—"There is none righteous—no not one." They felt their exposure to the wrath of the Lawgiver, and this I would have you to feel—"How shall we escape the judgment of God?" They felt the preciousness of a satisfying atonement, and this too I would have you all to rejoice in—"to joy in God through the Lord Jesus Christ by whom you have received the atonement." They, in the face of nature's fears and nature's difficulties, kept fast their confidence even as you should—"staggering not at the promise because of unbelief, but being strong in faith and giving glory thereby unto God." They, in the exercise of this faith, felt not only a peace but a power, "because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost;" and you also, upon the same belief, will most surely be made to realise the

same experience. And then, and not till then, it is that the evidence of one's election dawns upon the mind. It is only upon your obtaining the earnest of your inheritance, that you should ever quote this doctrine as any argument for the inheritance being yours. It is only because now upon the stepping-stone of grace in time, that you infer your preference by the destination of God to glory in eternity. It is not till you have dealt aright with the humble and schoolboy elements of the Christian faith, with the first principles of the oracles of God, that you have any right to associate this sublime mystery at all with the question of your everlasting prospects. This election, in fact, warrants no prospect to any in heaven, but as seen by him through the medium of his preparation on earth. It is only in as far as you have laid hold on the link of a present holiness, that you can infer of the chain of your history that it is to terminate in paradise. No one can read in the book of God's decrees, that he has been predestined unto glory; but all may read in the book of His declarations, what be the marks of those who travel thitherward. These he can compare with the book of his own character and experience, and he can count upon his own special destination to an eternity of bliss—only in as far, and in no farther, than as he is sanctified.

It is thus, and thus only, that I would have you to reach the settlement of your creed on the high topic of predestination. Many do not reach it on this side of death. Many a humble and genuine Christian feels himself baffled and bewildered thereby; and many such there are, who fall short of the

blessed assurance that God hath so signalised them. I would have you go to school upon this doctrine—not in the hall of controversial debate—not around the pulpits of an abstract theology—not among the mighty tomes that have handed down to us the ponderous erudition of other days. I want no other school than that of your own individual experience—no other preparation than that of a heart smitten by the contrite sense of its own deceitfulness, and heaving its aspirations towards Him who alone can comfort and can heal—no other expedients than those of which the very simplest enquirer would bethink himself, when, touched and awakened by the importance of eternal things, he is made to know the guiltiness of sin and the grace of an offered Saviour. Should you come to repent of the one and to rejoice in the other—that transition is all which I want, and all which I care for. After that you have really and historically made it, it is possible that you may review the way by which you have been led; and that you may recognise both the finger of Providence and the power of grace, in that you are what you are. There is many a Christian who refuses the doctrine in the general but seldom do you meet with a thoroughly christianised man, who refuses that it is altogether a higher hand which hath made him what he is—that it was in the counsels of God to have brought him within reach of that preacher's voice, whose demonstration first arrested him by the conviction of his danger—that it was He who directed his eye to that bible passage, which told with deciding efficacy upon his conscience—that the volume which

first evangelised all his feelings met him upon his else heedless way, by a direction impressed on it from Heaven—that the family bereavement which for a season dispossessed the world of its power, and laid him open to an influence from above, was the preparative by God Himself for that mighty change on which hang the issues of his eternity—Above all, that it was the Spirit from on high which gave enforcement to all that he heard, and all that he experienced—Insomuch that he has positively nothing which he did not receive; and all the faith and all the fruits of righteousness which belong to him, he of all men is the readiest to say, "Nevertheless not me but the grace of God that is in me." This man, whatever his general notion may be, is a predestinarian in all that relateth unto himself. He recognises the power and the will of God, in every footstep of his own spiritual history. He may not dogmatise on the case of others; but, in his own case, it is one of the firmest articles of his faith, and it ministers nought but humility and thankfulness to his bosom. He rejoices in the tokens of a blessed ordination, that he already hath obtained; and the more that these evidences of God's electing love multiply upon his observation, the more intensely does he feel a close and endearing relationship with his Father in heaven. It is not on the foundation of an imagined decree, but on the foundation of a felt and actual experience, that he grounds his confidence in God and joins the apostle in exclaiming—'If he be for us, who can be against us?' Hitherto the Lord hath helped us, and now He will not abandon the objects of His

care. He hath begun the good work, He will carry it on unto perfection. He hath granted the earnest, He will not withhold the fulfilment. We have experienced the supplies of his grace in time, and they are the pledges to us of our coming glory.

This is the period of your Christianity, an advanced and an elevated period, at which your thoughts on predestination may be profitable and may be safe. To take up with it sooner, is cutting before the point. It is wildering yourselves among initial perplexities, that only serve to darken the outset of your religious course. Insomuch that I have often been tempted to wish, that it had no place in the Bible at all; or, at least, that it never met the eye of an enquirer, on his first attempts to understand or to realise the salvation of the gospel. But the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men; and I must confess, that, in a goodly number of instances of spiritual distress which I have seen, it was this very doctrine of election which first shook the soul out of its lethargies—that it was the instrument for unsettling the natural man out of the listlessness of nature; and thrown agog by it, as it were, from the deep and fatal unconcern that might else have terminated in the sleep of death, he, alive and alarmed and set on edge by this one obnoxious article, hath gotten an impulse from it upon his spirit, under which he has passed from the state of a careless sinner to that of a hopeful and aspiring disciple. In such a case as this, it seems to have served as the projecting hook, by which to fasten the else inert soul to the whole contemplation; and what many, and

myself among the number, may at one time have wished to be expunged from the field of a sinner's vision altogether, has occasionally been the very word that startled him as it were into spiritual life, and whence he may date the time of his having become awake and at length intelligent about the things of salvation.

Ver. 32. 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

It is with great satisfaction that I now clear my way to a topic the most salutary, and I will add the most sacramental, within the whole compass of revealed faith—even to the love wherewith God so loved the world as to send His Son into it to be the propitiation for our sins. I fear, my brethren, that there is a certain metaphysical notion of the Godhead which blunts our feelings of obligation, for all the kindness of His good-will, for all the tenderness of His mercies. There is an academic theology, which would divest Him of all sensibility; which would make of Him a Being devoid of all emotion and of all tenderness; which concedes to Him power and wisdom and a sort of cold and clear and faultless morality, but which would denude Him of all those fond and fatherly regards that so endear an earthly parent to the children who have sprung from him. It is thus that God hath been presented to the eye of our imagination as a sort of cheerless and abstract Divinity, who has no sympathy with His creatures, and who therefore can have no responding sympathy to Him back again. I fear that such representations as these

have done mischief in Christianity—that they have had a congealing property in them towards that affection, which is represented as the most important, and indeed the chief attribute of a religious character, even love to God—And that just because of the unloveliness which they throw over the aspect of our Father which is in heaven—whereby men are led to conceive of Him, as they would of some physical yet tremendous energy, that sitteth aloft in a kind of ungainly and unsocial remoteness from all the felt and familiar humanities of our species. And so it is, we apprehend, that the Theism of Nature and of Science has taken unwarrantable freedoms with the Theism of the Bible—attaching a mere figurative sense to all that is spoken there of the various affections of the Deity; and thus despoiling all the exhibitions, which it makes of Him to our world, of the warmth and the power to move and to engage, that properly belong to them. It represents God as altogether impassive—as made up of little more than of understanding and of power—as having no part in that system of emotions which occupies so wide a space in the constitution of man, made after His own image and according to His own likeness. It is true that this image in us is wofully defaced; but can you think, that, after we are restored to it, all feeling and all fervency, whether of desire or of fond affection, shall be extinguished within us—that we shall not then compassionate the sufferings of others; and feel the kindlings of a seraphic fire in the contemplation of excellence; and have all the indignancy of pure and holy spirits at the sight of

worthlessness; and be actuated by the kindest regards and the most affectionate longings of charity towards all whom we can soothe by our simple regards, or benefit by our zealous and devoted services? But if all these emotions be ingredients of the renewed character, and it be after the image of the Godhead that the renewal is actually made, does it not prove that the Eternal Spirit hath emotions also—a characteristic of the Divinity indeed, which beams upon us from almost every passage in the history of the Saviour, who, though the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person, yet fully partook in all the sensations and all the sympathies of man; who wept, and who rejoiced, and who was angry, and who was exceeding sorrowful, and who with all His meekness and gentleness still delivered Himself with impassioned energy when denouncing the hypocrisies of the worthless—Surely if he who hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also, then ought we to conceive of Him not as of some frigid and desolate abstraction; but that in the bosom of the High and the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity, there live and move and have their busy operation—all the resentments of perfect virtue against the sinner—all the regards of perfect love and of infinite compassion towards the righteous who obey, and the penitent who turn to Him.

With this view of the Godhead, and which we hold to be the scriptural one, let us look unto that great transaction on which all the hopes of our sinful world are suspended. The Father sent His Son for our sake, to the humiliation and the agony

of a painful sacrifice. There is evident stress laid in the Bible on Jesus Christ being His only Son, and His only-beloved Son. This is conceived to enhance the surrender, to aggravate as it were the cost of having given up unto the death so near and so dear a relative. In that memorable verse where it is represented that God so loved the world as to send His only-begotten Son into it, I bid you mark well the emphasis that lies in the *so*. There was a difference in respect of painful surrender, between His giving up another more distantly as it were connected with Him, and His giving up one who stood to Him in such close and affecting relationship. The kin that He hath to Christ is the measure of the love that He manifested to the world, in giving up Christ as a propitiation for the world's sins. What is this to say, but that in this great and solemn mystery the Parent was put to the trial of His firmness—that, in the act of doing so, there were a soreness and a suffering and a struggle in the bosom of the Divinity—that a something was felt, like that which an earthly father feels when he devotes the best and the dearest of his family to some high object of patriotism. God in sparing Him not, but in giving Him up unto the death for us all, sustained a conflict between pity for His child, and love to that world for whom He bowed down His head unto the sacrifice. In pouring out the vials of His wrath on the head of His only-beloved Son—in awaking the sword of offended justice against His fellow—in laying upon Him the whole burden of that propitiation, by which the law could be magnified, and its transgressors could

be saved—in holding forth on the cross of Christ this blended demonstration of His love and His holiness, and thus enduring the spectacle of His tears and of His agonies and cries, till the full atonement was rendered, and, not till it was finished, did the meek and gentle sufferer give up the ghost —At that time when angels, looking down from the high battlements of heaven, would have flown to rescue the Son of God from the hands of persecutors—think you that God Himself was the only unconcerned and unfeeling spectator; or, that, in consenting to these cruel sufferings of His Son for the world, He did not make of His love to that world its strongest and most substantial testimony?

It blunts the gratitude of men, when they think lightly of the sacrifice which God had to make, when He gave up His Son unto the death; and, akin to this pernicious imagination, our gratitude is further deadened and made dull, when we think lightly of the death itself. This death was an equivalent for the punishment of guilty millions. In the account which is given of it, we behold all the symptoms of a deep and a dreadful endurance—of an agony which was shrunk from, even by the Son of God, though He had all the strength of the Divinity to uphold Him—of a conflict and a terror and a pain, under which omnipotence itself had well nigh given way; and which, while it proved that the strength of the sufferer was infinite, proved that the sin for which He suffered in its guilt and in its evil was infinite also. Christ made not a seeming but a substantial atonement for the sins of the world. There was something more than an ordi-

nary martyrdom. There was an actual laying on of the iniquities of us all; and, however little we are fitted for diving into the mysteries of the divine jurisprudence—however obscurely we know of all that was felt by the Son of God, when the dreadful hour and power of darkness were upon Him—Yet, we may be well assured, that it was no mockery—that, something more than the mere representation of a sacrifice, it was most truly and essentially a sacrifice itself—a full satisfaction rendered for the outrage that had been done upon the Lawgiver—His whole authority vindicated, the entire burden of His wrath discharged. This is enough for all the moral purposes that are to be gained by our faith in Christ's propitiation. It is enough that we know of the travail of His soul. It is enough that He exchanged places with the world He died for; and that what to us would have been the wretchedness of eternity, was all concentred upon Him, and by Him was fully borne. The suretiship was an equivalent for the debt, and the ransom laid down was an adequate price for the redemption that was achieved by it. When this thought takes full possession of the sinner's heart, it lightens him of all his fears. He feels the charm of an entire deliverance; and great are his peace and his joy, as he cherishes the full assurance of all being clear with God. He goes out and in by that way of access, which hath been consecrated by the blood of a satisfying atonement; and there are a light and a gladness in all his approaches unto God in Christ, which the world knoweth not. And it is well that he rates at its full amount, the expense

of that mighty service which has been rendered—that he deems it to have been what it really was, a costly sacrifice; and that he bethinks him solemnly and tenderly of the deep endurance of the cross. He should look unto Him whom he hath pierced, and on whom the heavy chastisement of his peace was laid. It is thus that the gladness and the gratitude keep pace with each other; and that in very proportion as he rejoices because of his full deliverance, does he feel the dovotedness of all his faculties to Him who hath achieved it. Christ gave up His life unto the death for him, so he gives up his life in entire dedication to the will of Christ—living no more unto himself, but unto Christ who died for him and who rose again. And therefore it is, that, as you approach these tables, I would have you look with an intelligent eye on the affecting memorials that are laid thereupon. I would have you light both your faith and your love at this altar; and when you see the symbols of the body that was broken and the blood that was shed for you, I would have you fully to recognise both the service that has been achieved and the suffering that has been borne in this mighty expiation.[1]

[1] Preached on a Communion Sabbath.

LECTURE LXIII.

ROMANS, viii, 31, 32.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

'For us all.' The apostle may perhaps be confining his regards in this clause to himself and to his converts, to those of whom he had this evidence that they were the elect of God—even that the gospel had come to them with power and with the Holy Ghost and with much assurance. But, notwithstanding this, we have the authority of other passages for the comfortable truth, that Christ tasted death for every man—and so every man, who hears of the expiation rendered by this death, hath a warrant to rejoice therein; and that He is set forth a propitiation for the sins of the world—and so it is competent for every one in the world, to look unto this propitiation and be at peace; and that He gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time—and so might each of you who hears this testimony, embrace it for himself, and feel the whole charm of his deliverance from guilt and from all its consequences. Christ did not so die for all, as that all do actually receive the gift of salvation. But He so died for all, as that all to whom He is preached have the real and honest offer of salvation. He is not yours in possession, till you have laid hold

of Him by faith. But He is yours in offer. He is as much yours, as any thing of which you can say I have it for the taking. You, one and all of you, my brethren, have salvation for the taking; and it is because you do not choose to take it, if it do not indeed belong to you. It is because you have treated it as the worthless thing that you trample under your feet, and will not stoop to seize upon. Or it is because, ere you appropriated it, you would break it into fragments, and either choose or reject of these fragments at your pleasure. All of you are welcome even now to salvation, if you are only willing for a whole salvation. I can promise nothing, nor can I hold out encouragement, to the man who would grasp at the offered immunity from punishment, but would nauseate the medicine that purifies and heals him—who would cling with all his might to the pardon of the gospel, but would decline its expedients for his sanctification—who can listen with a charmed ear to the report that is brought to him of the Sacrifice, but shrinks from that great moral revolution of taste and affection and habit that is wrought in every believer by the Spirit. Your mincing and mutilating of the testimony of God will do nothing for you; but your entire faith in His entire testimony will do every thing. And give me the man, who is desirous of a full rescue both from sin in its condemnation and sin in its hateful ascendancy over him—give me the man as ready to flee from the present worldliness, as to flee from the coming wrath—give me the man who is earnestly set, both on repentance from his sins, and the remission of his sins—And

all the treasures of the gospel are open to him. He may come, even now, and share in all the spoils that have been won by the Captain of our salvation. The everlasting righteousness that Christ hath brought in may even now, be to him an investiture of glory. The Holy Ghost, which is the promise of the Father, may even now descend abundantly upon his prayers. The gospel makes no man an outcast, though many is the man who makes an outcast of himself. And so to prevail upon them, as that they might move forward—so to make plain the gospel overture, as that each may put in for his share of its purchased and proclaimed amnesty—so to manifest the way that leadeth unto the fountain opened in the house of Judah for sin and for uncleanness, as a way that is patent and accessible to every man—so to vindicate the unexcepted goodness of God unto each, as that each may feel himself led thereby unto repentance—For this we have a host of testimonies in the Bible; and not the least impressive of these is, that God spared not His own Son but delivered Him unto the death for us all.

You know how constantly I have been in the habit of urging this representation upon you, at every returning sacrament—how, in the first instance I have laboured to impress upon every hesitating spirit the perfect freeness of the gospel invitation—how I have attempted to demonstrate in your hearing, that access to this feast is regulated on the very same principle, with access to Him who is the Master of the feast—how even he who, up to this moment has been the chief of sinners, might draw as confidently nigh as when he maketh his

first approach unto the Saviour—how there is no barrier of exclusion around this ordinance, which the Founder of the ordinance did not throw around His own person, or around His own office as the High Priest and the Mediator between God and man; and thus have I never felt any restraint in applying to this great festival those precious calls, first of a prophet, and then of an apostle: "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." This free invitation of the Old Testament is re-echoed by the New: "And the Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

It is thus that I should like to overbear the scruples of the fearful. It is thus that I would divest the communion of that certain air of repulsiveness, in which it stands forth to many a superstitious imagination. It is thus that I would have you to regard it in its true character as a feast of welcome and of good will, from which no past transgression, if repented of and turned from, was ever meant to exclude even those, who, in the darkness of other days, were the most abandoned of our species—And, even now, though smarting under the recency of some sore and melancholy fall — though all

trembling and abashed, at some fresh discovery of your weakness—though humbled to the very dust, because of the temptation that assailed and overcame you; and under the mortifying sense of which your memory still is agonised, and all the faculties of your soul are in a wild uproar of turbulence and disorder—Even in these circumstances of apparent desperation, if the sinner can only lift up his eyes to the mercy-seat, then may he move his footsteps to that table on which its emblems and its memorials are laid. The heart that can rise in humble and holy confidence to the Saviour, should ever be accompanied with the hand that can stretch itself out to the symbols of His death; and often, have we reason to believe in the history of our church, often has the appointed use of these been felt as a precious restorative to the broken spirit—often have the weary and heavy-laden penitent risen from the festival, with a reanimated vigour for making good the distance that he has lost, with all the energy of a man refreshed, for the toils of new obedience.

And you further know, how this latitude of invitation to the sacrament can be made to harmonize with the pure and holy character of this ordinance. Just in the very way that the gospel is at one and the same time, both a doctrine of free grace and a doctrine according to godliness. The past iniquities that have taken place in your history form no barrier in the way of your approach to these tables; but the purposed iniquities that have now place in your heart, these are what ought to form an invincible barrier. In coming here, yours must be the very state and the very preparation that are indis-

pensable to every sinner on his coming unto Christ. He is freely invited; but with the same breath of utterance he is told that he must forsake all. He has his salvation for the taking; but he is not at liberty to divide it into parts, and to accommodate his own taste by the selection of one, by the refusal of another. He must give himself over wholly to Christ; and be as willing to make use of Him as the Lord his strength, as to confide in Him as the Lord his righteousness. This must characterise his first movement to the gospel; and this must characterise his first and all his following movements to the table of the sacrament. The bread and the wine that he receives there, must be viewed by him, not merely as the symbols of that sacrifice by which he is reconciled, but also as the symbols of that spiritual nourishment by which he is renewed. And he partaketh unworthily, he eateth and he drinketh judgment unto himself—if to the peace of a redeemed creature, he do not add now the firm purpose, and do not experience afterwards the heaven-bestowed power, of a sanctified creature.

You will now perceive then, what the principle is, on which all our debarments from the table of the Lord do turn. It is not on the magnitude or the number of your past offences—for the guilt of these, that blood of which the wine of the table is the memorial, can wholly cleanse away. It is not even on the weakness of your present energies—for that nourishment from above, of which both the bread and the wine are the symbols, can wholly invigorate and restore them. But it is the duplicity

of a heart, that wavers between its own will and the will of God. It is the want of a thorough-going devotedness to Him who died for you and who rose again. It is a vice not in the performance, for who is there that cometh not short of the pure and the perfect commandment? Far more radical than this, it is a vice in the purpose. It is such a vice in the feelings and inclinations of the inner man, as met the discerning eye of the apostle, when he looked upon Simon Magus, and could perceive in him a heart not right with God. The compromise that he wanted to strike was between godliness and gain; and, in like manner, if you have not the singleness of aim and the singleness of desire—if you would partition the matter between the service of the one master and the service of the other—if you cleave not fully unto the Lord, and are not resolved to be His only and His altogether —You partake unworthily—you add the guilt of hypocrisy to the guilt of your ordinary transgressions—you do what is decent and creditable, it is true, in the eyes of the world; but you do it at the heavy expense of an insult to Him who made the world, of a solemn mockery in the face of Heaven. Beware of thus aggravating your guilt and your danger—"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; purify your hearts, ye double-minded."

You may remember that precious verse of our great apostle—"For if when we were sinners we were reconciled by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." There is a close analogy between the senti-

ment here, and that in our text of the day—'He who spared not his own Son but delivered him up to the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

This, my brethren, is the great hold, the great security, if I may so speak, which a believer has upon God. He hath a pledge in his hand already, that to him is the warrant or the guarantee of the very largest fulfilments. He hath accepted of Christ, and, having Him in sure possession—and the stronger his faith the surer that possession is—he cannot doubt that with Him he shall receive all things necessary to life and to godliness. God who hath bestowed upon him the greater gift, will not withhold from him the less. He who for his sake put the soul of His well-beloved Son to grief, will not fail, now that the grief is past and the glory of an exalted mediatorship is entered upon—will not fail to illustrate that glory the more, by the bright accomplishments and virtues of all His disciples. He who gave up Christ unto the sacrifice, will not fail through Christ to give out His Spirit unto the sanctification of all who are redeemed by it. God made a painful surrender, when He consented to the humiliation and death of our Saviour. But now that the Saviour hath arisen—now that the bitterness of the deep expiation is past—now that the toil, and the conflict, and the agony are all over—now that the sore obstruction is moved away, and, through the open portal of a reconciliation that Christ travailed in the greatness of His strength for the purpose of achieving, there is a free and unimpeded channel, through which

the mercy of God might descend in fullest exuberance on the guiltiest of us all—Now we have every reason for building ourselves up on the assurance, that He will uphold nothing which can make either for our grace in time, or our glory in eternity. After so wondrous a demonstration of His love, the believer hath nothing to fear. He is on high vantage-ground. He sees in the mission of Christ to our world, a token and an evidence of friendly regard, that already overpasses his largest expectations. He rejoices in the secure and the wealthy place that he now occupies, under the covering of the ample mediatorship; and when he thinks of the pledge which hath been already given, he delights himself in the abundance of hope—and peace floweth through his breast like a mighty river.

It is thus that I would have you to arise from these tables, refreshed and reassured by all that you have seen and tasted and handled here of the Word of life. In eating the bread, and in drinking the wine, you have at least received the symbols of the body that was broken, and of the blood that was shed for you; and if there have been a correspondence between the heart and the hand in this solemn transaction, you have really and substantially received the atonement. Christ is yours, and ye are Christ's. The act of reconciliation between you and your offended Lawgiver has been struck; and you may descend from the mount of ordinances with this song of triumph—'He hath given His own Son, and how is it possible that He will not with Him freely give us all things?'

This is the very reflection by which I would have

you to be sustained and comforted under a fear that might naturally enter your hearts, when you look onward to the pilgrimage that is before you. The fear is lest you fail by the way; lest you should again be surprised, and again be overtaken; lest sin and Satan should have some fresh advantage over you; and, in the darkness of a troubled spirit, you should lose the light of the divine countenance, and be cast aback, as it were, on that world from which you had emerged, and a fellowship with which is death. The main anxiety of a truly christianised heart is for its own integrity. Its breathings are after perfect love and perfect holiness. Its most sensitive dread is of moral evil. Its most cherished desire is spiritual excellence. Of the all things which are promised unto the believer, this is the thing which it is most intently set upon. That which Christ signalised above every other privilege by calling it the promise of the Father, that is the promise which every worthy communicant is most in earnest to realise—the Spirit given to all who trust in the Saviour—the Spirit that helpeth all infirmities, and strengthens with all might in the inner man—the Spirit that ever acts as the powerful though unseen auxiliary of the faithful, amid the heat and the hurry and the fierce onsets of the Christian warfare—the Spirit that, even among the familiarities of your daily path and the hourly occasions of your business, operates with real though invisible agency in the secret chambers of thought—He who writes the law of God upon your heart; and is ever ready, if He only be prayed and watched for, is ever ready, with His suggestions

of wisdom and of moral energy and even of scriptural admonitions wherewith to meet and to conquer the temptations of the cruel adversary—This is the gift that, now that he hath laid his confident hold on the gift of the Saviour, every true Christian most earnestly covets, and whereof he is most insatiable. The gift of the Spirit is that for which he now wrestles in supplication with his God. Like the law which it imprints on his renovated heart, it is more desired by him than gold yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Now this is what I would propose as your defence, and your main stay, against the melancholy shipwreck of those who return unto the pollutions of the world, are again entangled therein, and at length fall away. It is the Spirit who keeps all who look for Him from this awful catastrophe. This living water descendeth, not upon the heart in one wholesale ministration; but, like your daily nourishment, it is dealt to you in occasional supplies. It is grace to help you in the time of need, and therefore bestowed upon you as you need it. It is distributed in season, and so as to suit the ever-recurring necessities of the soul. You are therefore not to count upon an inherent stock of grace. You are at all times to go as at the first, on the footing of a wholly void and vacant and unfurnished creature; and it is when you go thus, that the promise is verified of "open thy mouth and I will fill it." "The height of creature-perfection" says an eminent divine "lies in the constant habit of bringing our own emptiness to Christ's fulness." You are

not to presume on the store of your accumulated energies; you are not to presume on your acquired habits; you are not to shift your confidence from the emanating fountain to that stream which, if not momently fed and upholden therefrom, would soon fleet away, and leave nought but a dry and rocky and unfruitful strand behind it. Your eye must be ever towards that fountain, whence all the supply cometh. You may be grateful and glad, because of the glories of the ascending superstructure. But you do not lean on the superstructure, you lean on the foundation. And so it is, that I would have you at all times to have no confidence in yourselves, but to rejoice in the Lord Jesus—to fetch from Him all those influences by which you are enabled from one hour to another, to serve God in the spirit—ever to be intermingling your aspirations with your efforts, your prayers with your practice; striving mightily, yet supplicating constantly; fervent in spirit while not slothful in business: And be assured that it is on the basis of profoundest humility, that the noblest elevations of Christian worth and excellence are reared.

That process by which the prayer of faith and the performance of familiar duty are made thus to reciprocate the one with the other, goeth on among the recesses and the intricacies of experimental religion. It forms the main spring and aliment of that life, which is hid with Christ in God. He who verifies this process in his own heart, realises fellowship with the Father and with the Son. The secret of the Lord is with him; and in the busy chambers of the inner man, there is a joy that the

world knoweth not, and a spiritual mechanism at work which the world cannot comprehend. But though they see not the working of the mechanism, they may both see and admire the produce of that working—even as we might have our eye regaled by the beauty of a pattern, though you have not an understanding for the complex machinery by which it is inlaid. Even so it is that the eye of nature, cannot apprehend what that is which hath wrought the true and the lovely and the honourable on the groundwork of your character—yet each one of these features, and many more, can be discerned by the men who are without, and call forth an applauding testimony from them all. And be it your care, that your light so shine before men, that they, who see nought but mysticism in your orthodoxy, and in your high communions with God, and in your life of faith upon His Son, and in your habitual fellowship with His Spirit—that they, utterly in the dark about the secret principles of your character, may at least be compelled to render homage to the visible exhibitions of it. It is thus, my brethren, that Christ is magnified in your body. It is thus that His doctrine is adorned; and that your souls become a living epistle, read and acknowledged not merely by your fellow-saints, but read and seen of all men. They cannot understand the high and the hidden walk of godliness. But they can understand your common honesty. They can understand your every-day usefulness. They can understand the courtesy of your manners. They can understand your patience under injuries, and the noble sacrifices that you make in the cause of humanity.

They can understand all the duties of that varied relationship, which you hold with your fellow-men. They know the distinction between a good and a bad parent, between a kind and a quarrelsome neighbour, between a dutiful and a disobedient son, between a profitable and a pernicious member of society. Make it clear to them as day then, that your Christianity which is a religion of faith is also a religion of virtue—that all the fit and graceful moralities of life follow in its train—and that, while it assimilates to the angels who are above, it scatters beauties and blessings innumerable over the face of society in this lower world. Strive thus to recommend to others the gospel which you profess. Strive mightily according to the grace of God that is given to your prayers, and that worketh in you mightily.

LECTURE LXIV.

ROMANS, viii, 31.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The apostle, in the utterance of these words, evidently proceeds on the belief that God is upon his side; and it is a belief grounded on certain things which may be found in the preceding context: 'What shall we then say to these things?' And surely it concerns us to search what the things were, that we too, if possible, may realise the same glorious confidence; and be raised to that highest vantage-ground on which a creature can be exalted, even the vantage-ground of the Divine favour, whereupon he stands secure amid the shock and the conflict and the hostility of all those subordinate elements which be in the universe—and just because he can count on the greatest Being of the universe as his friend.

In taking a retrospect then of this epistle, with a view to ascertain the footing upon which our apostle rests the assurance of God being for him, we shall find that there are two distinct considerations upon which the assurance turns. The first consideration is that of God's truth in His promise—a consideration which lays hold on those who have faith, and which lays no hold on those who want it. What first then led the apostle to count upon God

as his friend, was faith in God—a faith that counted Him to be faithful—a faith that hung direct upon the promises of God. Of this an example was given by Abraham, and is quoted by Paul, in the preceding argument. The patriarch relied upon God, from the time of his very first communication. He did not wait the experience of God's truth—he believed in it from the outset. He did not ground his confident anticipation of the whole promise being fulfilled, from the fulfilment of one or any part of it. He trusted from the moment of its utterance. He reckoned upon God's friendship, so soon as God had made any overture to him at all. He believed, ere he set out from his native country; and prior to all the subsequent tokens that he obtained of God's faithfulness, in the course of his journeying over distant lands. He believed in Him the first time, and before that he met with Him a second time. The truth of God's whole promise was more unlikely to the eye of nature, before that Abraham had got any part of it made good to him, than after that part of it was verified by an actual accomplishment. But it was at the time of greatest unlikelihood, that his faith made its brightest display, and was most acceptable to God. It was because that against hope he believed in hope—it was because he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief—it was because fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform—It was because of all this that his faith was well-pleasing to God, and because of all this that his faith was imputed unto him for righteousness.

Now this very footing upon which Abraham placed reliance upon God as his friend, is a footing furnished in the gospel of Jesus Christ to one and to all of us. "It was not written for his sake alone that it is imputed to him, but for ours also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead." The very first address of the gospel message to your understanding, should be met by your faith. You should not postpone your belief in the promises contained there, till one or more of them have been accomplished. You might see a truth and honesty in all the promises from the first; and, anterior even to the very least experience, confidently wait for the fulfilment of them all. Man's faith should come immediately on the back of God's utterance; and my reason for insisting upon this is, if possible, to convince one and all of you—that even now you may step over to the place on which the apostle is standing in our text, and join him in the triumphant affirmation that God is upon your side. The most alienated of God's rebellious creatures has a warrant in the gospel for changing sides, and that immediately, from a state of variance with God to a state of friendship and peace with Him. With the uttermost stretch of our charity we cannot believe, that all of this congregation are within the bond of the covenant—that all have entered into reconciliation, and are now encircled within the limit of God's adopted family. Of more importance then is it that you should be told, that, among other grounds for the assurance of God being indeed your friend, there is one of which the most

hopeless of outcasts might instantly avail themselves—one which brought Abraham out from the land of idolatry, and which should now bring out you from amongst the idolatries of a present evil world—one upon which the patriarch of old entered forthwith into the friendship of God, and upon which you also might forthwith enter into the same friendship, and that without the intervention of any given period during which you have to wait for signs and fulfilments and for more of the reiteration of the gospel testimony in your hearing. There is warrant and warrant enough for your proceeding upon the gospel testimony now. It is addressed to you as well as unto others. The voice of "Abram Abram," heard from the canopy of heaven by the patriarch, was not a more specific call—than the voice of "whosoever will let him come," read in your bibles, is a specific call on each who is here present to proceed upon this invitation; and to set out, not on that journey by which he describes a great physical distance from the land of his fathers, but most assuredly to set out on that journey by which he describes a great moral distance from the vain conversation of his fathers: And with the very first footstep we contend, and it is a footstep that should be taken now, might there be this delightful confidence to urge and to animate the whole movement—even that God will receive him and will be a Father unto him, and that he shall be as one of His sons and daughters as saith the Lord Almighty.

It were doing injustice to the gospel, did we not hold it forth as charged with friendly overtures,

and that for the instant acceptance even of the worst and most worthless among you. Even now, are you offered the justification that is by faith. Even now, the sceptre is held out to you of peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Even now, could we only awaken your confidence,—even now, did the message wherewith we are entrusted but call forth a responsive trust in your bosom, might you rejoice in the conscious possession of that grace or favour wherein the believer stands, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is well to open up the way of your direct translation into the friendship of Heaven; and, for this purpose, to insist both on the perfect freedom and the perfect universality of Heaven's invitations. They are to you who are afar off, as well as to you who are nigh. There is an offer of forgiveness of which you shall be held to have accepted, simply by your reliance on the honesty of the offer. There is a proposal made to you for an exchange of conditions, even that you shall exchange your present condition of hostility for that of entire peace and amity with God; and a faith in the reality of this proposal on your part, will be sustained on His part as the valid signification of your having acceded to the proposal. It is thus that the agreement which had been broken between Heaven and earth is restored. It is thus, if I may so speak, that the knot of reconciliation is tied. Your belief is the ligament that binds together the parts which had been dissevered. And there is not a surer concatenation in the whole expanse of Nature or of Providence, than that which obtains between man's

faith and God's faithfulness. It is upon your believing in the testimony of God regarding His Son, that you pass from the ground of condemnation to the ground of acceptance; and we again repeat, that there is not an individual amongst you who lies without the scope of this generous and widely-sounding call—so that however much God is against you at the present because of your unrepented of and unexpiated sins, even now, upon the instant of your moving from sin unto the Saviour, God at once will be for you, God at once will be your friend.

And now that I have said of this transition from a state of enmity to a state of peace with God, how it is a transition competent to one and all of you at this moment,—let me but make one short utterance on the blessedness of the transition itself—even of that wide and momentous difference which there is between what by nature you are, and what by grace you might be—between being the objects of God's wrath, and the objects of His good-will—between the Sovereign of creation, and having all its energies at command, looking towards you with all the displeasure of His broken law and His incensed dignity; and that same Sovereign looking to you with as much complacency, as if His Son's unpolluted obedience had been rendered personally by you, or as if His splendid righteousness had been all your own—and so rejoicing over you to do you all manner of good. Let God be your enemy, and He is the enemy of all who have not laid hold of the great propitiation; and what, I will not say is your condition in time, but what are your pros-

pects for eternity? In time you may be comfortable, and along with this you may be careless; and, amid the busy engrossments of a little day, forget the dreadful reckoning and the dreadful retribution that await you. But the danger is not less real, that you have shut your eyes against it; and, amid the tremors of your approaching dissolution, you may be visited with the fears and the forebodings of that which is to come —or, as often happens, the agonies of the perishing body might only cradle the soul into a deeper lethargy about the interests which are imperishable: And, falling asleep amid the profound insensibilities of nature,—not till the spirit is sisted in the presence of its offended God—or not till the risen man comes forth at the sound of the last trumpet and stands before the judgment-seat, will you have full understanding of those dread realities by which you are now encompassed. And therefore it concerns you now, to cleave unto the propitiation which God Himself has set forth, and for the very purpose that peace may be made with Him and that from your enemy He may become your friend—that it may be possible for Him the just God to be at the same time your Saviour; and, sinner as you are, to fill your heart with the satisfaction and the triumph of those who know that God is upon their side. The very greatness of such a consummation is a barrier in the way of your believing it. The incredulity of nature is fostered into strength and obstinacy, by the very largeness of the offers wherewith nature is addressed. The narrow and suspicious heart of man cannot find

room in it, for the generosity of Him whose thoughts are not as our thoughts and whose ways are not as our ways. He cannot bring himself to believe, that heaven, with all its glories, is indeed so open to him—or that the gospel is indeed so free—or that eternity, in all the richness of its promised blessings, is indeed so much within his reach—or that there is nought but the one step of his own confidence in the message of peace that has come down from the upper sanctuary, between the sinner's soul and the loving-kindness of that God who waiteth to be gracious. And therefore it behoves every minister of the New Testament, to be loud and frequent and importunate in knocking at that door, by which the tidings of grace and pardon may enter in; and often to repeat the testimony in the sinner's ear, that unto him a Saviour hath been born; and to protest on the side of Heaven that nought but good-will to earth is the feeling there, if earth would only respond thereunto, and not keep at so sullen and impracticable a distance away from it; and to spread abroad the assurance among all its rebels, of the God whom they now imagine to be shrouded in darkest ire and severity against them, how soon and how certainly they might have Him for their friend.

Let me now advert, but advert briefly, to another ground on which Paul affirmed both for himself and for his converts, that God was upon their side. The first ground is the ground of a direct faith in the promises and invitations of the gospel —a ground placed before the feet of one and all

who now hear me—and on which every one of you is free, nay is entreated, nay more is commanded, and last of all is threatened, that he might be persuaded to step over upon it even now and be safe. The second ground is distinct from the first, the ground of experience—that ground which is occupied by those who are not merely infant believers, but who have been believers for some time; and so, in addition to their first faith in God's faithfulness, can now allege their actual finding of this faithfulness. The distinction between the one ground and the other, is exceedingly well marked by the apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians: "He whom also ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Here was the trust of those who simply counted the word to be true—a trust competent to you all at this moment. But then he goes on to say—"In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance." Here was the experience of those on whom the promise had been in part fulfilled; and who esteemed that part, as a pledge or an earnest of the fulfilment of the remainder; and who could therefore now look forward to the purchased possession, not merely because the promise of it had been sounded in their ears, but because the pledge of it had been put into their hands. They were like men who had gotten a first instalment punctually made good to them, and so were confirmed in the hope of the whole engagement being liquidated. Agreeably to the promise, they had received grace in time; and therefore they confided

the more on that which was also included in the promise, even glory in eternity. Now Paul and his disciples had been preferred to this additional vantage-ground. Their experience was added to their faith. It was this experience which confirmed to them the hope which made them not ashamed. They looked the more confidently to the promised joys of heaven, that they actually felt the love of God to be already shed abroad in their hearts. They had brighter hopes of a place being prepared for them there, that they were conscious within themselves of a preparation for the place going on in their own souls here. They believed when they first heard of a promised grace on earth and a promised glory in heaven. But now that they had been visited by the grace—now that this part of the promise, instead of being merely counted on with faith, had been verified and made good to their own present finding, there was superadded one ground of trust to another; and they could say with the Psalmist "As we have heard so have we seen in the city of our God."

Now my reason for treating of the one ground distinctly and separately from the other, is that the first may even now be entered upon by all—the second, I fear, may have only yet been entered upon by few. The word of the promise may be addressed to all, and it is the part of all to believe it. An experience of any of the things promised may have only yet been realised by a very small number. Now I should like not to discourage those who have never yet been on the second ground, and to assure them that this ought not to check the instantaneous

entrance of themselves on the first ground. They must not wait for the experience of the gospel, till they shall have the faith of the gospel; but they should enter upon the faith immediately, and from that they will be conducted to the higher platform of experience. The apostle and his disciples had been elevated to this platform, and let me fondly trust that some at least who are here present may now be standing upon it—some who have had a finding and a foretaste of heaven in their souls—some who can look forward to the good work being perfected upon them, and that not merely because of their faith in the promise, but because of their finding within themselves a performance in that a good work is actually begun—some who can compare their memory of the past with their consciousness of the present; and can now vouch for a hatred to sin, which they wont not to feel; for a discernment of Scripture, which they wont not to have; for a distaste of worldly concerns and worldly companionship, the very opposite of that tendency which wont to reign and have an ascendant over them; for a love to the people of God, whom perhaps before they nauseated as the dullest and the weariest of all society; and, if not for a love to God Himself as their reconciled Father in Jesus Christ, at least for a grief and a self-reproach in their hearts that they do not love Him more and serve Him better. Now these are the first-fruits of the Spirit of grace, and the symptoms of a coming glory—the goodly evidences of your movement towards a destination of final and everlasting blessedness—the marks and the recognitions of that very path which leads

through the pilgrimage of time to the promised land of eternity. They constitute a most precious addition to the argument of God being on your side —for, over and above His promises which you rely upon by faith, they are His gifts which you have realised by experience. They are to you the satisfying pledges of a friendship in which you have trusted ever since you knew the gospel, but of which you have now tasted the fruits and the actual verifications in your own person. You can now affirm that God is for you, on the ground not merely of what He has promised for you, but on the ground of what He has done for you; and while I would have all to shake off their distrust, and join even now in our apostle's exclamation—yet it is for you to feel a peculiar assurance, and with peculiar emphasis to say, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'

Having thus stated as simply as I could, the two main grounds on which it is that man may count upon the friendship of God; or, in the language of my text, upon God being for him—let me now proceed shortly to the inference which the apostle derives from this blessed relationship, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'

It is evident, that, over against the conception of God being his friend, he raises the conception of some other Being as his enemy; and the question is, With a friendship so powerful as that of the Creator, what have we to dread from a hostility so feeble as that of the most formidable of His creatures? It is tantamount to the sentiment which he expresses in his epistle to the Hebrews, "The

Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The sentiment however might be so extended as to include every species of adversity, though it should not proceed from the malice or ill-will of any being whatever. It might fairly be translated into this more general form, 'If he be for us *what* can be against us?' There are many of the evils of life, though not the most severe and overwhelming certainly, that cannot be traced to any mischievous intent on the part of a living and willing enemy. There is the death of relatives, and there are the accidents of misfortune, and there are the misgivings of fond and promising speculation—And in the walks of merchandise some of you must oft have experienced, how crosses and disasters accumulate upon you, and give a dreariness and dismay to the earthly prospect; and, did you look no further than to what is visible or to what lies before you on the region of sense, all might appear to be dark and menacing; and you might figure yourself to be a deserted creature, against whom all the chances of fortune and all the elements of nature seem to have entered into a conspiracy for your ruin. And this is just the triumph of faith over sense—when you can be upheld in the thought, that, after all, the evils of life are but the shadowy spectres of a passing scene that will soon flit away; and that, behind all which the eye of man can reach, there is a good and an all-powerful Spirit who smiles propitiously upon those only interests which are worth the caring for; and that all the energies of this world, which look as if they stood in battle-array against your prosperity

or your peace, are nought but instruments in the hand of a presiding Deity, who, for the trial of your confidence in Himself, might brandish them over your head, but only to discipline and not to destroy you—driving in all the props of your earthly confidence, that you might lean the whole weight of your dependence upon Himself, and prove how firmly your soul is anchored upon its God by the very strength and violence of those agitations which still cannot turn you away from Him.

There can be no doubt, however, that the apostle, in the text, sets over, and in opposition to the actual friendship of his God, the conceived malice of some living and designing enemy. From such, he and his fellow-disciples suffered in the persecutions of that era; and from such, all of us are still exposed to suffer in the manifold collisions of human passion and human interest that obtain throughout society. It is hard to believe, that there should be in any of our fellow-men, a spirit that is truly diabolical—a fiendish delight in all the pain and mischief and dissension and disgrace which it can be the instrument of scattering—a restless activity in the pursuit of evil, and of cruel suffering to others—and a satanic satisfaction in the success of their hateful and hated enterprises. Such a character, it is thought, might do for some deep and darkly aggravated romance; but is never realised among the familiarities of living and daily experience. Yet we do hold it to be a real, though perhaps a rare and occasional phenomenon in human life. We think that for the purposes of a secret discipline, a scourge of this kind is at times

permitted to appear, who might be the terror of his relationship, and the torment of all with whom he has ever had closely or intimately to do—a being, though in human shape, yet in the whole purpose and policy of his mind infernal; and, in the hidden chambers of whose breast, the very counsels are brooding that give their hellish occupation to the spirits which are below—a being whom it is unsafe to approach, lest we should be implicated in his wiles; and lest, among the mysteries of his fell iniquity, some infliction or other should be preparing for us—a being of whom the patriarch of old might have said, "O my soul, enter not thou into his secret," recoiling from all fellowship with such a spirit just as he would from the pandemonium for which it is ripening. When the apostle exclaims 'Who can be against us?'—we are not to imagine that a Christian, in his progress through the world, is to be exempted from the hostility of such characters as these. When fully understood the apostle says, 'If God be for us who can be against us and prevail?'—There will ever in this world be a hostility that shall bruise the heel of the Christian, though its own head shall be bruised under his feet shortly. For trial and for exercise, the tares must grow along with the wheat—the good and the evil must live together—the path of the redeemed through time must be beset by the contempt or the calumnies of an evil world—and perhaps in the way of sanctifying him wholly, or of bringing upon him some signal chastisement, an enemy may be raised, in whose every word there is deceit, and the very tenderness of whose mercies is

cruelty. Yet if the Lord be upon his side, he most assuredly has nothing to fear. The short-lived triumph of every earthly foe will speedily come to an end. The day is posting, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open; and when there shall be a right allotment both of the vengeance and of the vindication.

But perhaps it is of more Christian importance, to advert to another kind of living adversary than the most fierce and formidable of our fellow-men. We think that Paul had such an adversary in his eye; for, in the enumeration of a few verses below, he speaks not of earthly plagues and persecutions alone, but of angels and principalities and powers as being against him. He reminds us here of what he says elsewhere, that we wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities against powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world against spiritual wickedness in high places. However much the doctrine of a great moral warfare between the Captain of our salvation on the side of righteousness, and the arch enemy of all that is good on the side of rebellion—however much this doctrine is slighted and has become now-a-days the topic of an infidel scorn—yet, among the Christians of the New Testament, we find that a reference to Satan and to his wiles is constantly mingling itself with the concerns of their sanctification. They speak of themselves as being personally implicated in the warfare; and well they might—for the very field of contention is human nature, and an ascendancy over it is the prize of victory. Practically and really, it cannot be a thing of in-

difference to us, if there be an actual and a busy competition at this moment between the powers of light and of darkness for a mastery over our species. There must be a something incumbent upon us, and that we are called on to do surely, in connection with a struggle of which the object to each of the parties is the possession of ourselves, and the sway of a superior over the powers and the principles of our constitution. We are not to sit, and merely look on as passive and unconcerned spectators, during the pendency of a contest, by which our own interests are so momentously affected. And, accordingly, we are called upon to resist the Devil, and he will flee from us—to resist not the Spirit of God, and He will take up His abode in our hearts—to put away from us every instigation of evil, as coming from the evil one—to cherish every instigation of good, as coming from the Holy One and the Sanctifier—Thus to view ourselves as engaged in a warfare of which we are the subjects; and unseen but lofty and supernatural beings are the principals: And, to encourage us the more in the prosecution of this warfare, we are told that Satan shall be bruised under our feet shortly, and that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world, and that Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil, and finally as in the text that if God be for us, there is none who can successfully be against us.

LECTURE LXV.

ROMANS, viii, 32.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

We have endeavoured to make it good, that the encouragement of the last verse might be taken on two separate grounds—first on the ground of direct faith in the calls and promises of the gospel, and secondly on the ground of certain fulfilments which personally and experimentally take place on those who have believed the gospel. The first encouragement then might be addressed to all—for it might be embodied in the very first overtures of the gospel; and these should be laid before all for their acceptance, on the moment of which a reconciliation with Heaven ensues and God is upon their side. The second encouragement is for those who have found and tasted that God is gracious, in the change that by grace He has wrought upon themselves—in the pledges which they have already received of a coming glory in heaven, even by a conscious preparation for it going on within their own heart and upon their own history on earth—in the first-fruits of the Spirit upon their souls, and by which the evidence of God's friendship has been carried forward from promises to gifts, from those promises which they relied on at the moment of their first believing, to those gifts wherewith even in this life the believer is privileged.

Now it so happens that this very distinction is still more obviously spread before us in the 32nd and 33rd verses—for, instead of being enveloped under the covering of one verse as in the 31st that we have already attempted to expound, we find that of the two following verses, the former is addrest to a belief which may or may not have as yet been accompanied with experience; and the latter is addrest to experience alone. When He spared not His own Son, He delivered Him up for us all; and He is so far given to every one of you, that, though not yours in possession, He is at least yours in offer. In this sense God may be said to have given to each and to every eternal life, which life is in His Son. And so much has every one a warrant to lay hold of this gift, that God is offended if he do not—He feels it an indignity to Himself, if you do not have confidence in the honesty of His offer—He is affronted by it as if by an imputation of falsehood, saying that "he who believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son makes God a liar, and this is the record even that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in his Son." All ought even now to close with this overture; and, on the instant of his doing so, he is instated in the full benefit of the apostle's argument, and might confidently join him in the question of my text 'He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

This is an argument of which the apostle seems on more occasions than one to have felt the great strength and importance, and to have urged it ac-

accordingly There cannot, in fact, be imagined a firmer basis on which to rest our confidence in God. He has already done the greatest thing for us, and why not expect then that He will do what is less? The great and heavy expense has already been incurred, and surely He will not leave unfinished what with so much cost and difficulty He hath carried so far. He will not make abortive that, to begin which required such a sacrifice at His hand; but now to end or to complete which, will require but the free indulgence of His own kind and generous desires for the happiness of those whom He has formed. Before that He gave up His Son unto the death, there was a let and a hindrance in the way of His mercy to sinners; but now that the let is overcome, now that the hindrance is moved away, now that justice and truth have been vindicated and no longer forbid the exercise of His tenderest compassion towards the men of our guilty world—now will that compassion flow over in blissful and bounteous exuberance on all who shall put themselves in its way; and He who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up unto the death for us all, is now free and ready to give us all things.

There is an expression used elsewhere by the apostle of the unsearchable riches of Christ. We are apt to look at the truth that is in Jesus, as if it were a meagre and very limited sort of doctrine—consisting perhaps of a few bare catechetical propositions, which we can get by heart just as we do the rules of syntax or arithmetic; and which, almost as little as these, excite any sensibility or awaken any glow, whether of imagination or feeling, on the

part of its disciples. It is marvellous how many there be, who, familiar with all the terms of orthodoxy, are utter strangers to the warmth and the vividness and the power which lie in the truths of it; and who, though they can listlessly repeat the whole phraseology of evangelical sentiment, have not yet entered into the life and substance and variety of thought and of application which belong to it. The interrogation of the text, we will venture to say, may have been read by some of you a hundred times over, without your being aware of the comfort and power of argument wherewith it is so thoroughly replete—read with that sort of unmoved torpor in which so many prosecute their daily mechanical task of perusing a chapter in the Bible—run over much in the same way that a traveller passes rapidly along in a vehicle whose blinds have been raised, so as to intercept all the diversified loveliness of that scenery which he has not once looked upon. He can speak of the miles he has described, as you can of the chapters. Both of you have made progress; but the one without having had his senses regaled by the prospects of beauty and fertility in the landscape, and the other without having had his spirit regaled by aught in the promises of Scripture or in the preciousness of its consolations.

Now this verse is so very pregnant with these, that if I could but unfold the matter aright—it might perhaps let you in to the significance and the descriptive truth of the apostle's phrase—the unsearchable riches of Christ. The fruit of our search may be such a view of gospel wealth, or the fulness

of gospel blessings, as, not only to regale our spirits with all that we have found, but as to convince us that there is as much more to find as might furnish the delightful employment of an eternity. We may be made to see more of the ways of God, than are yet known or conceived by us; and yet after all say with Job, "Lo these are parts of his ways, and how little a portion is heard of him!" The economy of our redemption is a theme for the understanding, as well as for the affections, to dwell upon—it being not more hard to feel as we ought, than it is to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and to comprehend the length and the breadth and the depth and the height thereof.

But, to go rapidly over a few of the leading points, First—God hath already given the very greatest thing to set my salvation agoing, and what security then is there that He shall give all other things which are needful to complete that salvation? He hath given what every parent who had but one beloved son would surely feel the greatest of his treasures, He hath given His only and His well-beloved Son for us all. In human transactions, the first fruits of an engagement are generally but a small fraction of the whole—the pledge is but a minute proportion of the final and complete performance—the earnest is a mere scantling of that main bulk which is still in reversion—the instalment only, a part, and generally a small part, of the sum that is due—And yet in each of these cases, there is a distinct and additional hope awakened of the entire fulfilment, from the token that has thus been put into your hands. But in this transaction between

heaven and earth, the matter is reversed—the pledge is more dear and valuable to Him who is the giver, than all that He hath pledged Himself for—the earnest of what He will do in future, is a mightier surrender than all put together which He hath promised to do. It is true, that, in reference to our own interest and feelings, the joys of the coming eternity may be of greater value to us, than all the first fruits and tokens, which, in the shape of grace and a growing meetness for heaven, are conferred upon believers in time. But, in reference to God, He has already given up in our behalf what to Himself was of the greatest value. He has given up the Son of His love to the death for us all;—and, having done this, what a ground of confidence that He will freely give all things!

But secondly, take into account the deep and mysterious suffering that was incurred, at this first and greatest step in the historical process of our salvation—and that now the suffering is over. Take into account that the travail of Christ's soul hath already gone by; and that now He has only to see of the fruit of this travail and be satisfied. Remember that when He set forth from His place of glory on the errand of our world's restoration, He had the dark imagery of persecution and distress and cruel martyrdom before Him; and that what He thus originated with pain, He has only now to prosecute in peace and triumph to its final consummation. And remember that we estimate the matter wrong, if we think not of His death as a substantial atonement—if we measure not the sore infliction that He sustained, and that drew tears and

agonies and cries even from that Being who had the strength of the Divinity to uphold Him—if we measure not His big distress by that guilt of millions, which an eternity of manifold and multiplied vengeance could not have washed away. And all this He did, and all this His Father consented that He should do and suffer, in order to open up a clear avenue towards the restoration of the human family—And think you it possible, that, having done thus much with sore and heavy labour, He will not go forward on the path that He Himself hath struck out, and on which He can now advance by easy and delightful procession toward the full accomplishment of His great undertaking? Will the Father who spared not His own Son from the indignities and the pains of a deep humiliation, and that to commence the enterprise of our recovery to God—will He now refuse to magnify His Son, by most willingly giving all and doing all that might be needful to perfect this recovery, and bring the enterprise of Him who is the Captain of this glorious warfare to its most honourable termination? In other words, after so much has been endured to set on foot the salvation of our world, will He suffer it that all this endurance should go for nothing; and will not He who has already given for sinners His only-beloved Son, give to them also the needful grace upon earth and the finished and everlasting blessedness in heaven?

And thirdly—remember that all which God hath done from first to last in the work of our redemption, has been entirely of free will. It was not because He owed it to us, but because His own heart was

set upon it. It has all along been with Him a matter of purest and most perfect freeness—not the reluctant discharge of an obligation, but the forth-putting of His own spontaneous generosity. This makes it a wholly different case from that of a debtor, who, after having made payment of so much, would like to get off from his obligation for the remainder. There is nought of this kind to stint or to straiten the liberality of God. There is no such straitening with Him, however much we may be straitened in our own narrow and selfish and suspicious bosoms. The truth is, that when He did give up His Son, it was because He *so* loved the world. It was His own love for us, that prompted this wondrous movement on the part of Heaven, towards the earth which had strayed into a wide and wretched departure away from it. His desire is towards a restoration; and though there be many who would like to stop short of the debt which they owe being fully paid, there is none who would like to stop short of the desire which they feel being fully accomplished. The thing were a contradiction; and, more especially, if such was the force of this desire that it bore itself through the struggles and difficulties of a most arduous outset —it is utterly impossible that it will make a dead stand, and refuse to go farther when there is nought but an inviting and a gentle progress before it. It was because of God's longing desire after the world, that He gave up His Son unto the sacrifice; and, after the sacrifice has been gone through, He will not turn round upon His own favourite object, and recede from the world which He has done so much

to save. That force of affection which bore down the obstacle that stood in its way, will, now that the obstacle is removed, bear onward with accelerated might and speed to the accomplishment of all the good that it is set upon. To do otherwise would be throwing away the purchase after the purchase-money had been given for it; and well may we be assured that after God had freely given such a price for our salvation, He will freely give all things necessary to make good that salvation.

But—fourthly—it should still more be recollected, that when He did give up His Son, it was on behalf of sinners with whom at the time He was in a state of unreconciled variance. It was in the very heat and soreness of the controversy. It was at the period when His broken law had as yet obtained no reparation—when insult without a satisfaction, when disobedience without an apology and without a compensation, had been rendered to Him—when a blow had been inflicted on the sovereign state and dignity of His government, and a sore outrage laid on Heaven's high throne by the defiance of creatures whom its power could annihilate or sweep away. That was the time of Heaven's love, and the time at which the Son of God went forth unto the sacrifice. Now the state of matters is altered. The breach has been healed. The debt has been paid. The sinner has got hold of his surety, and may be no longer reckoned with. The law has been set up again in vindicated dignity; and, by means of an expiation for the rebel's guilt, the monarchy of God rises in untainted honour above the rebellion that earth had waged

against it. And if God did so much for sinners then, will He do nothing for them now? If in the season of their unmitigated guilt He gave up His Son, will He cease from giving now in the season of their atonement? If, when nought ascended from the world but a smoke of abomination, the price of its redemption was freely surrendered—will there be no movement of grace or liberality now that there arises with every prayer which is uttered in the name of Christ, and every mention which is made of His offering, the acceptable incense of a sweet-smelling savour? If there was such a forth-putting of kindness to the children of men, when looked to by God in the native deformity of their own guilt—will there be no forth-putting now, when He looks to them as covered and arrayed in the goodly investiture of His Son's righteousness? And if in our state of condemnation then, He delivered Him up for us all—is not the assurance doubly sure, that, in our state of acceptance now, He will with Him also freely give us all things?

But once more. He gave up His Son, at a time when mercy was closed in as it were by the other attributes of His nature—when it had not yet found a way through that justice and holiness of truth, which seemed to bar the exercise of it altogether—when it had to struggle therefore and make head against an obstacle, high as the dignity of Heaven's throne, and firmly seated as the eternal character and constitution of the Godhead. It was in fact on very purpose to open an avenue through this else impassable barrier, that Christ went forth; and, by a substitution of His own obedience for

ours, and a sacrifice by His own death instead of ours, magnified the law in that very act wherewith He averted its penalties from the head of our devoted species. And is not the inference as resistless as it is animating—that the same mercy, which forced a passage for itself through the imprisonment of all those difficulties which hemmed it in, will, now that they are cleared away, burst forth in freest and kindest exuberance among all those for whom it scaled the mountain of separation; and, now that the middle wall of partition between God and the guilty is broken down by this tide of compassion, that it will set in upon our world, fraught with the richest blessings from that throne whereon sitteth the God of love—who rejoices over the success of that enterprise by which He might again beckon to Himself His wandering family. He who gave His Son while Justice was yet unappeased, will freely give all things now that Justice is satisfied; and if when the obstruction lay between the Lawgiver and the rebel, if then it was that the mightiest surrender on the part of Heaven was made, the conclusion is irresistible, that, on the obstruction being done away, there is ready to shower down upon the earth the most plenteous dispensation of all that is good and generous and friendly.

But I feel this subject to be inexhaustible. It is not the preciousness of Christ as being Himself a gift that the text leads me to expatiate on. It is the goodness of it as a pledge of other gifts. Unspeakable blessing in itself, it is the sure harbinger of every other blessing in its train—rich in

the promise of things to come, as well as great in the performance of a present stupendous benefit; and, along with the full acquittal and the all-perfect righteousness which it brings along with it to the believer now, affording the best guarantee for all the grace and all the glory that shall afterwards accrue to him. There are even other securities for this than those on which I have insisted—other aspects in which the sure and well-ordered covenant may be regarded—other evolutions of its solidity and strength, that might well cause the believer to rejoice in it as in a treasure the whole value of which is inestimable; and to delight himself greatly in the abundance of peace and of privilege that with Christ are invariably made over to him. For will God stamp dishonour on this His own great enterprise of the world's redemption? Will He leave unfinished that which He hath so laboriously begun? Will He hold forth the economy of grace as an impotent abortion to the scorn of His enemies; and more especially of him, against whom the Captain of our salvation has gone forth on a warfare, to root up his empire over the hearts of men and to destroy it? Is not the very hostility of Satan to all the designs and doings of our Saviour in itself a guarantee, that we, who have run to Him for refuge, shall be covered over with His protection and be at length brought out by Him in triumph? It was to destroy the works of the Devil that our Saviour went forth, and, after having done so much to silence him as an accuser, will He then stop short and leave him in full possession of his hateful ascendancy over the spirits of men? He hath fur-

nished His disciples with the merit of His own obedience and death as their plea of justification, and by which they can repel the charges of their great adversary. Will He furnish them with nothing by which they might repel his temptations? Will He only release them from the prison-house of condemnation, and suffer them to remain as helplessly the slaves of corruption as before? Will He not complete their deliverance from the great enemy of human souls; and, after having so thoroughly purchased their forgiveness at the court of heaven, will He not give them all things that might be needed to achieve their sanctification also?

Never then, in all the views that can be taken of it, was there a firmer basis for hope to rest upon, than that gift of Jesus Christ that has already been bestowed—regarded as the pledge or the guarantee of all those future gifts, that make out for those who trust in Him a full and a finished salvation. Never was foundation more surely laid, nor can we tell how many those unshaken props are by which it upholds the confidence of a believer. We invite you to cast upon it the whole burden of your reliance. In the quietness and the confidence wherewith you lie down upon it, you shall have strength. You will be in the very attitude wherein God delights to pour down upon you of the prodigality of His blessings—when you stand before Him in the attitude of dependence. He will not dishonour the trust that you lay upon His Son, by leaving you to the mortifying experience that it is a vain treacherous reliance, and wholly unproductive of any good to your souls. O then lean upon it the

whole weight of your expectations; and be very sure, that He who hath given you His Son, will with Him also freely give you all things.

'All things.' We are not to understand this absolutely—but rather appropriately to the condition of one who has set forth upon the good of eternity, as the great and engrossing object of his heart. All things certainly which to an immortal being, and who is in full pursuit of the blessings of immortality, are worth the caring for—all those things for which he has a warrant to pray, and which if he pray for in faith he shall receive—all those things which are held out to him in promise, and which go to complete his privileges as a believer—all things qualified in the way which Peter has done, when, speaking of the great and precious promises, he makes them embrace all things which are necessary to life and to godliness—all things that belong to the relation of one, who, by receiving Christ, has become a child of God's adopted family; and therefore, in a more special manner than all the rest, referring to that gift which by way of distinction has been termed the promise of the Father—or, as pre-eminent in the list of those things which God bestows upon His now reconciled children, the Holy Spirit. "Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts"—a gift so universally bestowed upon those who are Christ's, that it may be affirmed without exception "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." And so, were we called upon to specify the most prominent of those all things which God giveth unto all who receive Christ, we would

say, that they were those things which prospered and carried forward the sanctification of a believer, which furnished him with the grace and enabled him to render the services of new obedience—those things which marked him as a new creature, and stamped that holiness upon his character here which rendered him meet for the only kind of happiness that shall be enjoyed hereafter. In a word, the great gift which is in reserve for the believer after he hath laid hold of an offered Christ, is the gift of a clean heart and a right spirit—whereby he is inclined to walk in the way of those commandments that he had aforetime violated—whereby he renounces ungodliness; and that Being, who ere then was habitually forgotten, is now habitually referred to as a Father to whom he owes all filial and affectionate regards. "For as many as receive Christ, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

You thus see how it is that the gospel of Jesus Christ, ushers in all those who embrace it to a life of virtue and of progressive holiness. Their purification is as much a free gift as their pardon is. The Spirit called a free Spirit is as much a ministration from on high, as is that act of forgiveness which passes upon all at the moment of their believing in the Saviour. Christ is given, and all those things of which He is the pledge are given also. Eternal life is a gift through Him, and so is meetness for eternal life a gift through Him. The Christian disciple is as much and more a man of performance, than the disciple of mere morality is. Only he performs, not with that strength which he natively possesses; but he performs with that

strength which he has prayed for. It is this which forms the grand peculiarity of his practice. Most strenuous and painstaking in all his duties; but there is ever mixed up with his various and unceasing activities the apostolical sentiment, "Nevertheless not me but the grace of God that is in me." It is thus that his humility and his holiness keep pace together; and he feels himself not more a pensioner upon God for the pardon of his offences, than he is for ability to think a right thought or to do a right and acceptable thing.

The two gifts are inseparable. All who are justified are sanctified. All who truly receive Christ enter immediately upon a course of sanctification—in which course they prosecute a departure from all iniquity, and press forward to the perfection of holiness as the mark of their earnest and persevering ambition. Be assured, that you have not received Christ if you have not received an impulse upon your spirits on the side of goodness and righteousness and truth—that if He be not washing you, you have no part in Him—and that in the very act of stretching forth upon you the hand of a Saviour, He stretches forth upon you the hand of a Sanctifier. Hence it is that there are certain tokens, by which a man may most assuredly know that as yet he hath no part nor lot in the matter. If ye have not yet begun a struggle with sin—if he do not feel a new tenderness upon his conscience—if he be not visited with a sight and sense of his ungodliness—if he be not breaking off from that which he knows to be offensive to God—if the state of his heart and practice

be not a thing of practical concern with him—Then is there every reason to fear, or rather every reason to conclude, that as yet Christ is not his and he is not Christ's. If Christ had really been given to him, a change of spirit and of life would have been among the very first of the all things given along with Christ. And if no such change has actually taken place, there is as yet no interest of any kind in the Saviour.

This is a point on which we should like you to have a clear and consistent understanding. Do not wait till you be holy, ere you shall cast your confidence on the Saviour; but cast your confidence on Him even now, and you shall be made holy. It is not your faith that is the accompaniment of your holiness—but it is your holiness that is the accompaniment of your faith. The gift of Jesus Christ is not to you as a holy, but to you as a sinful creature; and we entreat the most sinful of you all to lay hold of Him. With Him you shall receive holiness. After ye have believed, ye shall be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. I do not want to embarrass the simplicity of your dependence upon Christ, when I speak of holiness as the unfailing mark of your discipleship. I barely inform you what you have to look for as the fruit of that dependence. Go to Him now and accept of the offered Saviour; and certain it is, that, along with Him, you shall be made to accept of a clean heart and a right spirit. But do not invert this order, else you shall never arrive at peace of conscience; and as little will you ever arrive at holiness of character. It is not your sanctification

that forms the stepping-stone to your peace; but your peace that forms the stepping-stone to your sanctification. Lay hold upon Christ as your peace-offering; and then the very God of peace shall sanctify you wholly. Come forward at the gospel call, and touch the sceptre of forgiveness which it holds out to you. There is a virtue in the touch —a purifying as well as a pacifying virtue. There is not merely spiritual comfort but spiritual health in it; and the soul of the patient is more than reconciled from a state of wrath into a state of acceptance—it is renewed from sin unto holiness.

LECTURE LXVI.

ROMANS, viii, 33, 34.

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Let your first act be an act of reliance upon Christ for pardon; let this act be so repeated by you, day after day and hour after hour, as to ripen into a habit of reliance—and then shall we confidently look for the marks and evidences of your regeneration. And these marks may at length so multiply upon you—they might so brighten and become palpable even to the eye of your own observation, that you shall begin to suspect—nay further to guess—nay further still to be assured, and to read the full assurance, that you are indeed one of the elect of God. That you are among the elect is not a thing to be presumed by you at the first; but a thing gathered by you afterwards, from your subsequent history as a believer. If you are wise, you do not meddle with the doctrine of election at the outset—whatever comfort or establishment of heart you may draw from it, in the ulterior stages of your spiritual progress. When you go forth on the career of Christianity, you look at the free offer of the gospel. You perceive it to be addressed to you, as well as to others. You yield a compliance therewith. You enter into peace with God—in

obedience to His own call, whereby He now beseeches you to be reconciled to Him. It were great presumption indeed for you, to start with the assurance that your name is in the book of God's decrees; which He keeps beside Himself in heaven —but no presumption at all, to set out with the assurance that you are spoken to in that book of God's declarations, which He circulates through the world. The "look unto me all" and the "come unto me all" and the "whosoever will let him come"—these are sayings in which one and all of the human family have most obvious interest. You presume nothing when you presume upon the honesty of these sayings. And if furthermore you proceed upon them—if now you strike the act of reconciliation; and forthwith enter upon that walk by which they who receive Christ, and receive along with Him power to become the children of God, are sure to separate themselves from the children of the world; and pray for grace, that you may be upheld and carried forward therein; and combine a life of activity with a life of prayer —Then, and after perhaps many months of successful perseverance, you may talk of your election, because now you can read it, not in the book of life that is in heaven, but in the book of your own history upon earth—not that you have drawn out the secret from among the archives of the upper sanctuary; but because now it stands palpably engraven upon a character the light of which shines before the eye of the world, and which is read and known of all men—not that you have access to that tablet which has been inscribed from eternity by the fin-

ger of God; but that you have access to the tablet of your own heart, and, by the eye of conscience, can discern thereupon the virtues of the new creature, inscribed by the Spirit of God within the period of your own recollection. Even the apostle went no higher than this, when judging of the state of his own converts. Their election was to him not a thing of presumption, but a thing of inference—drawn, not from what he guessed, but from what he saw—brought, not from those third heavens which he had at one time visited, but lying palpably before him and within the precincts of his own earthly home. When he tells the Thessalonians that he knew their election, he tells them how he knew it, "Knowing brethren beloved your election of God—for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and with much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake, and ye became followers of us and were ensamples to all." He concluded them to be of the elect, not from any access that he had to a book of mysteries, but simply from the manner of men they were. It was not because of any high communication that he had with Heaven upon the subject; but because of the daily companionship that he had with his disciples, and in virtue of which he saw the very things that others saw also; and observed nothing else or nothing more than those evidences of faith, those graces of holy and new-born creatures, which were known and read of all men.

My anxiety is that you do not embarrass yourselves with this matter of election—for there is

positively nothing in the doctrine which ought to encumber, or in any way to darken the plain and practical work of your Christianity. What I fear is that some may founder at the outset of their discipleship, by prematurely and previously meddling with it. I want that if they feel any speculative difficulty about it now, they may not waste their strength on the business of resolving it; but set out on the scholarship of the gospel in a plain way, and leave their election to be gathered afterwards from the progress which they have made in that way—which is neither more nor less than the way of holiness. Then they may both perceive a consistency, and feel a most precious comfort, in the doctrine; but now, and I speak to those who are meditating an entrance on that path which leadeth unto heaven, now their concern is to accept of Christ as He is freely offered to them in the gospel, and to take full encouragement from the reasoning of our preceding text, "He that spared not his own Son but gave him up unto the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" I would have them to close alike with the pledge and the promise; and on the high vantage-ground of Christ being theirs I would have their hearts to be gladdened even now with the assurance of faith, and thence that they should pass forward to the assurance that cometh from experience—giving all dilligence to make their calling and election sure, and assiduously labouring at those things of which it is said in the New Testament, that if a man do these things he shall never fall.

The point at which God begins in the matter of our salvation, is not the point at which man begins. The apostle assigns the order of God's procedure when he says, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, and whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified." It is at the call that man's part commences. Let him listen to the call—let him yield a compliance with the call—let him take both the comfort and direction of the call—Understanding it to be both a call from wrath unto acceptance, and a call from sin unto righteousness. It were well that he kept by his own share of the process, and encroached not on the part or the prerogative of God. These ambitious speculations about God's eternal decree and man's eternal destiny, often argue a creature misconceiving his own place, and making himself like unto his Creator. He in fact comes in at the middle, between the decree that went before and the destiny that comes after; and, alike ignorant of both at the outset of his Christianity, his distinct and only concern is with the matters that are in hand—with the guilt that can be charged upon his person—with the vengeance that lowrs upon his prospects—with the offered interposition of a Saviour to cleanse away the one and wholly to avert the other—with the honest invitation of that Saviour to cast upon Him the burden of every fear, and to make use of Him as the appointed Mediator whose business it is both to reconcile and to sanctify. This is the opening at which man is admitted; and be very sure that you

misunderstand the gospel, and are entangling yourselves with mysteries that you would be greatly better to abstain from—if you have any other conception of it, than that there is most wide and welcome admittance for you all; and, let your obscurities be what they may about that high transcendental process which connects the first purpose of the Divine Mind with your final place in eternity, there should at least be no obscurity in that process which you have personally and individually to do with, and by which it is that whosoever believeth shall be justified, and whosever is justified shall be sanctified, and whosoever is sanctified shall be glorified.

I would therefore say to all who profess their faith in Christ, that the great business on hand is their sanctification. And it is one of the all things which God gives freely along with His Son to all who believe upon Him. It is this my brethren which constitutes the great peculiarity of their practical habit. They work, not upon the strength which they natively possess, but upon the strength which they have prayed for—given no doubt with freeness, but because asked in faith; and leading to vigorous obedience, but from a vigour that is infused, and not from a vigour which properly or originally belongs to them. This is the secret thing in which the great strength of a Christian lies. He works mightily, because the grace of God works in him mightily; and one of the most beautiful harmonies in the experience of every true Christian, is the accordancy that obtains between the worth of his performances and the fervency of

his prayers. It is in this walk of secrecy that the secret of the Lord is at length made known to the believer; and in those multiplied exchanges which take place between prayer and the answer of prayer, he reads the tokens of his coming destination. As the present grace brightens upon his person, the future glory brightens to his hopes. His humility and his holiness keep pace together—till from the increasing splendour of the one, he may without violence done to the other conclude that his election is of God. He ascends from the platform of faith to the higher platform of experience; and though, even on the former, he may join the apostle in that strain of triumph wherewith he brings this magnificent chapter to a close—yet it is from the latter, because the more advanced and loftier elevation, that he has the fullest confidence in saying, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?'

'It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?' I have already said all that I mean to do at present which bears relation to the first clause of the verse, and shall now proceed to a few observations on this last clause of it. I fear that it is to a very small degree experimentally known, how much the light and love and liberty of a Christian's mind depend on the sense that he has of his justification; and that he is in his very best and healthiest condition, when, reviewing the grounds of this justification, he feels his security to be rivetted as it were and himself securely resting upon the strength of them. There is one aspect

of justification that is peculiarly fitted to impress a comfort, and a clear impression of deliverance, on the heart of a believer—even the aspect set before us in the text, and where it is stated as proceeding directly and of His own personal act from God Himself. 'It is God that justifieth.' It is He to whom he was liable, declaring that all was fully paid. It is He who alone was entitled to make the charge against us, declaring how amply and conclusively we stood discharged from all further reckoning on account of our iniquities. It is He who before was our offended Lawgiver, Himself undertaking our cause and pronouncing with His own voice upon the goodness of it. It is the God from whom at one time we had nought to apprehend but the emphatic condemnation and the overwhelming vengeance—it is He filling His mouth with arguments upon our side, and pleading our cause, and protesting how much and how completely He is satisfied. It is our vindication coming from the very quarter whence our vengeance was looked for; and that Being who alone had the right to accuse, not merely acquitting and so withdrawing from us all the dishonour that is due to guilt; but raising us above the midway state of innocence, and regarding us with all the positive favour, and as entitled to all the positive regard, that is due to righteousness. It is He who might have wreaked upon us of His sorest displeasure, now telling how much He is pleased with us, and how rightfully we are privileged to obtain from Him the rewards of a happy and honourable eternity. It is He of whom we might well have dreaded, that when the arm of

His justice was lifted up it would be lifted up to destroy—it is Himself saying, that this very justice demanded not only our exoneration from all penalty, but our preferment to the glories that are due to righteousness. They who have felt the terrors of the law—they who have been stung with the arrows of self-reproach; and, alive to the miseries of their spiritual condition, have shrunk from the dreaded eye of a judge and an avenger, as it took cognizance of all their ungodliness—they who have laboured under the agonies of a burdened conscience, and to whose inner man this witness hath rung the alarm of an angry God and of His utter intolerance for evil—They can report how blessed the emancipation is, when, through faith in "the tidings of the gospel, they come to see that the whole account between them and the Lawgiver is reversed; and that He who before challenged them because of their offence, now challenges the whole universe to make good one charge or one ground of condemnation against them—when from His own mouth they hear how valid is the plea that now they have got hold of, and how much He has reason to be satisfied—when, in the precious doctrine of our redemption, they are made to perceive that the suretiship was an equivalent for the debt, and the atonement by Christ a full reparation to the dignity of Heaven for all the outrage which sinners had inflicted on it; and so that all is clear with God, who now can at once be a just God and a Saviour—can be just while the justifier of those who believe in Jesus—justifying them freely by His grace through the redemption that is in His own Son.

I might expatiate further upon how thoroughly the conscience is unburdened of its guilt, by the very Being against whom the guilt has been contracted thus taking the work of our vindication into His own hands; but I now pass on to remark upon that tendency which there is in us, to overlook the direct interest that God the Father has felt, and taken all along, in the matter of our salvation. We are apt to regard Him as having no great will for our deliverance, till that will was wrought upon and prevailed over by the services of the Mediator in our behalf—that with Him lay all the displeasure which wreaks itself upon a work of vengeance, while with His Son lay all the delight which compassion feels in a work of mercy—that to the one there belongeth the jealousy of a vindictive nature, while to the other there belongeth the engaging generosity of a benevolent nature: And thus I fear, that, as the general effect in many instances of the whole contemplation, the government of Heaven is conceived to be in the hands of an inflexible tyrant, who, at the same time, has had his severity often appeased and turned away by a Son of popular and endearing qualities; and under whose administration it is, that the character of the divine jurisprudence is disarmed of all those terrors by which it would else have been encompassed. We greatly fear, that, along with the general truth of their contemplation, there is a wrong impression of the Godhead; and that, along with the truth and justice and holiness of the Lawgiver, there are not seen the tenderness that He feels toward His own offspring—the softness and sincerity of His paren-

tal longings, after the children who have wandered in the errors of their disobedience away from Him.

Now, to rectify this impression and restore you to a juster sense of that great Being with whom you have to do, I would have you to gather from Scripture the part He has taken in the whole recovery of our fallen world. The pity of God has in fact been working upon our side from the very outset of the human apostacy; and you do Him wrong—you bear in your heart the hardest and most injurious thoughts of Him, if you conceive of Him otherwise, than as one bereaved of his family, and bent on the object of calling them back again. It is true—that, for what in reference to the government of His moral and intelligent creation may significantly enough be called Reasons of State—it is true, that, to uphold the dignity of His throne—it is true, that, to vindicate the attributes of His nature, and to save the Universe which He had thrown around Him from the spectacle of a dishonoured law and a degraded Sovereign—There behoved, ere sin could be passed by, there behoved to be a sacrifice. But with whom did this way of reconciliation originate?—with God Himself who found out the ransom—with Him who so loved the world as to send His only-begotten Son into it. At whose expense was the sacrifice made? Had the Father think you to bear none of it, when He spared not the Son of His love but delivered Him up unto the death for us all? Was there no struggle do you imagine in the bosom of the Divinity, when He thus surrendered the object of His dearest affection, and laid upon Him the full weight of the

world's atonement? In the sufferings of Christ will you overlook the palpable expression of regard for our alienated species, manifested by Him who consented to these sufferings?—and, after looking to this transaction in all its relations and its bearings, will you refuse to allow, that, while judgment is the strange though needful work of the Almighty, mercy after all is His darling attribute; and that to strike out an open conveyance by which it may be poured exuberantly over the face of the whole earth, was indeed a grand design in that economy of redemption, which Himself did frame and which Himself hath instituted. All along He has taken a direct and an interested part in the object of our world's restoration. He did not wait in passive and unmoved indifference, till another should interfere; or cherish the stern purpose of revenge within His bosom, till another should step forward and satiate the wrath that else was unappeasable. The truth of Heaven, we admit, and the stable interest of Heaven's high monarchy, did require an expiation; but it was the love of God Himself that prompted the undertaking—it was in love that He prosecuted it through all its obstacles and its hard necessities —it was in earnest busy and persevering love, that He carried forward the enterprise from one step to another; and no sooner was the atonement rendered, and the great moral difficulty resolved whereby a just God might reinstate the sinner in acceptance who had made open defiance to the authority of His moral government—no sooner were the great sanctions and securities of this government provided for, than He opened the prison-door of

the grave, and raised to His throne of Mediatorship the once crucified but now exalted Saviour—no sooner was the plea of His everlasting righteousness brought in, than Himself laid hold of it; and it is now His delight to use it for the purpose of our vindication—So that God Himself asserts for us the merits of His Son's obedience; and, instead of dissevering Him from the work of our salvation, we have the warrant of apostolical example for saying that God Himself affirms our cause, and that it is God Himself who justifies.

That righteousness which Christ brought in, is termed in various places the righteousness of God. The Jews stumbled and fell because they sought to be justified by their own righteousness, and would not submit to the righteousness of God. But how great our security, if, instead of being found in our own righteousness, we are found in that which God calls His own. Well may He be said to justify those who believe, when He holds them to be invested with a righteousness which it is His part to vindicate, because to Himself it belongs—dear to Him therefore as His own character, and as ready to be asserted and made good by Him in the eyes of a whole universe as the attributes of His own nature.

Over against, and in counterpart to the office of God as our justifier, there is put the question, 'Who is he that condemneth?'—suggesting the idea of another and an opposite party, who felt an interest in our guilt and was intent on making it good—who had charges to prefer, and laboured after the establishment of these charges—who delighted

in the work of accusation, and felt a satisfaction and a triumph should he succeed in this his favourite employment. It instantly recalls the title which is given to our great adversary in the book of Revelation, as the accuser of the brethren; and in the history of Job there is given a very forcible exhibition of the characteristic pleasure that he feels in pleading on the side of condemnation. We can fancy an interest in this, because, by every case in which he fails of his object, he is abridged of his monarchy; and each, who, either under his own personal righteousness or under the provided righteousness of the gospel stands justified in the sight of God, is one man more wrested from the thraldom of his power. But we allude to this, not for the purpose of remarking on the gratification that every instance of made-out and established guilt yields to his ambition, but on the gratification that it yields to his malice. In like manner as I would lure you to virtue, by setting forth the graces of its pure and perfect exemplification in Christ—so I would warn you against all vice, by setting forth the hideousness of its deformity in the picture that is given of him whom Christ came to destroy; and, more especially, I would have you to understand that satisfaction in another's guilt is diabolical—that in the complacency which is felt by some on the discovery of a neighbour's weakness or his crime, there is that which savours of the spirit and the morale of pandemonium—that even in the zest which is so currently felt when scandal mixes up of its infusion with the gossip of an assembled party, there are the distinct traces of a contagion from

below—that there is a secret exultation of heart on some humiliating exposure of an acquaintance, which is absolutely fiendish—Nor am I aware of any test that so decisively fixes the distinction between a good and an evil spirit in man, as the emotion which arises in his bosom, when there is brought to his ears the delinquency of one to whom he had been accustomed to yield the homage of unimpeached character. ' The grief of the former and the gladness of the latter, serve to mark two characteristics of the human heart, which stand as opposed as do the elements of light and darkness. It is said of charity that it rejoices not in iniquity. But in the hateful temperament which I am now labouring to expose, there is upon the sight or the report of such iniquity a hellish joy—a gleam of malignant triumph, that is peculiarly hideous; and were I called to fasten on the one trait that forms the most sure and specific indication of a satanic heart, I would say that never is it given forth so unequivocally as by him, who, on the first opening to a brother's humiliation or disgrace, would eagerly seize upon it, and rejoice in the hold that he had gotten—who would now delight himself with the ignominy of him, on whom he wont to lavish the hypocrisies of his seeming friendship; and, like that great father of lies to whom he bears a family resemblance so strikingly appropriate, would convert the base advantage into an instrument by which he might tyrannize and entangle and destroy.

' It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again.' I shall not expatiate further on the death of Christ as the basis of our justification; but only

advert to the way in which the argument for our confidence, is made more complete and conclusive still by His resurrection. Instead of looking to His death, let us look rather to His having risen again. In a former verse of this epistle where He is said to have been delivered for our offences, He is said to have risen again for our justification. And it would greatly tend to augment your security —did you only realise the contemplation of a now alive and risen Saviour, at the Lawgiver's right hand—were the eye of your faith open to behold Him, sitting and holding converse with His Father there—could you only represent to yourself the present and the actual state of matters in the upper Sanctuary, where He, who by His own death expiated the sinner's guilt, now interposes with God that the sinner's trust might not be put to shame—where He who was Himself the surety, can allege the debt to have been fully paid; and hands up His people's prayers to the seat of the Eternal, mingled with the incense of His own merits, accompanied with the remembrance and the plea of His own sacrifice. This is a topic on which I cannot expect the unbeliever to sympathise—for he would need to have a spiritual revelation of the objects, ere he could take on the distinct or the vivid impression of them. But only grant of any human creature, that he saw this to be a reality; and with what a light and unburdened heart, he may rejoice and be in confidence before God. Let him but figure the things which are above as we have now represented them—let him take a correct view of Heaven's mercy-seat—let him look to the Throne of Grace as

it is now constituted; and, if he just see it as it is, what should restrain him from entering with all boldness thereunto? The God who is upon it waiting to be gracious—the Mediator who is beside it beckoning with kindliest welcome the chief of sinners to draw nigh, and undertaking to be the Advocate of all who shall put their cause for eternity into His hands—The Father delighting to honour the Son, and give full effect to His great enterprise—The Son presenting to His Father another and another application for mercy; and with this resistless argument of the law itself being more proudly magnified by an act of pardon sealed with the blood of His own atonement, than it ever would have been by the obedience of the transgressor for whom he pleads—The perfect unity of heart and of counsel between Him who intercedes for mercy, and Him who judgeth in righteousness—And the golden harmony that now awaketh among all the attributes of the Godhead, when, through Him that liveth for ever after the order of Melchisedec, His full and His finished salvation is accorded to the offender. It is by this wondrous economy of a perpetual and consecrated priesthood, that such music is now heard in Heaven; and that, in sweetest concord with the whole of Heaven's jurisprudence, love for the sinner mingles and is at one with the now vindicated majesty of holiness and truth. The believer, before the eye of whose enlightened understanding these things stand in open and convincing manifestation, feels all the glory of an elate confidence as he looks to the grounds and the guarantees of his safety; but then does he chiefly

rejoice with joy exceeding and full of glory, when he looks to Him who was dead and is alive again. It is true that by His obedience unto death, He has furnished every sinner of the world with the materials of a most substantial and satisfying plea; but by rising again He has Himself become the pleader—And let us not wonder if the apostle himself felt as if ascending upon a higher vantage-ground—when, passing from the consideration of the death of Christ, he so exultingly adds that yea rather He is risen again, and is even at the right hand of God, and also maketh intercession for us.

I may just here advert to that historical circumstance which is connected with the resurrection of the Saviour—even that it was achieved by a forth-putting of direct and personal agency on the part of the Father. On this subject we have several express testimonies in the Bible. "Whom God hath raised up." "This Jesus hath God raised up." "Being by the right hand of God exalted." "Whom God hath raised from the dead." "Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you." "Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him." There are many similar testimonies, and the believer has not overlooked the preciousness of them. To him all Scripture is profitable; and the information of those scriptures which have now been specifically cited, has not been without its use in the establishment of his faith. They prove by a striking historical event that the justice of God has been satisfied—that He has accepted of the sacrifice as a full and finished expia-

tion—that in releasing our surety from the imprisonment of the grave, He has now ceased from all further legal demand upon us—that in placing Him by His own side in heaven, He testifies His complete approval of all that has been done for the salvation of the world—In a word, that the great errand has been fulfilled; and that, with the now admitted presence of our forerunner within the veil to plead the accomplishment of it, nothing is wanting to the confidence wherewith we may now leave our cause in His hand and look for the sure mercies of David.

LECTURE LXVII.

ROMANS, viii, 35—39.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

To have the precise understanding of this passage, you should remember that the love of Christ in ver. 35, and afterwards the love of God in ver. 39, may be understood in two senses—either as signifying His love to us, or our love to Him. The whole context seems to decide for the first of these meanings—as in that part of it which goes before, it is of God's dealings with, and regards to His elect; it is of His being upon their side; it is of the surrender that He made in their behalf, when He gave up His Son unto the death, and with Him shall freely give them all things; it is of Christ dying and interceding for our good; it is of the love that is felt in heaven and is pointed downwardly to earth, and not of the love that is felt on earth and is pointed upwardly to heaven—that the argument is held: And in that part of the context which follows, it is still of Him who loved us that he speaks. Notwithstanding however, we shall find, I think,

on a narrower examination of the whole passage, that our love to Him is embraced therein, though it be His love to us that is more directly and obviously expressed by it.

You will observe that there is nothing in all the adversities which Paul enumerates, that would in the first instance tend to effect a separation between Christ's love to us and our own persons. The tribulation and the distress and the persecution and the famine and the nakedness and the peril and the sword, to all of which the Christians of that day lay so peculiarly exposed—there was nought in these that could of themselves alienate the regard of the Saviour from those who had enlisted themselves as His followers and friends; but every thing, on the contrary, to enhance the interest and the tenderness which He felt for them. But though they did not effect such a separation, yet they might indicate it. At least, they who were weak in the faith might be discouraged into such a conclusion. They might be led to infer, that, as the ills and adversities of life were the portion of those who embraced the Saviour, there could be little love on His part towards those whom He had the power to rescue from these, but did not choose to put it forth. When they saw that it was for His sake they were so pursued even unto the death, their courage and their confidence might have given way, and they have stood in doubt of there being any regard on Heaven's part towards them. The terrors and trials of that distressing period might have prevailed against them; and they, trusting no longer to the affection of Christ for their per-

sons or their interests, might have renounced their faith and along with this their affection for the Saviour.

Now St. Paul in the passage before us, is bearing up his own mind, and that of his converts, against the despondency of this unbelief. He, as as it were, is not suffering himself to think, that all these dark and lowring adversities manifest either the decay or the dissolution of any love for them on the side of their merciful High Priest. He comes, in fact, to the very opposite conclusion. "Nay in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." He looks back to the great fight of afflictions that they had formerly been involved in. He recalls the manifold escapes, or, what is more characteristic of victory, the occasions on which they had been armed with intrepidity for the contest, and were enabled to face all the hostilities and hardships of the Christian profession and to endure them. And he connects the inspiration of all that courage by which they had been upholden so nobly, with Him from whom it descended. They were conquerors, only through Him that loved them. It was He who nerved them for the conflict. It was He who gave them either wisdom to overcome in argument, or strength to suffer under the inflictions of personal violence. It was a moral warfare in which they were engaged, and in this He enabled them to conquer. It was a struggle between pain and principle; and He so succoured and sustained the latter, as that they could bid defiance to the fiercest assaults of the former—causing the spiritual to

prevail over the animal nature; and between these two elements, the infused heroism of the new man and the creeping fearfulness of the old, enabling the grace to make head in this internal conflict against the corruption and to carry it.

And here it is of great practical importance to remark, that the way in which God often manifests His protecting and fatherly care of us, is, not by obtaining for us the safety of a flight; but, better and nobler than this, the triumph of a victory. In plainer words, He may neither withdraw the calamity from us, nor us from the calamity; but, leaving it to bear with full weight upon our spirits, He pours a strength into our spirits which enables them to bear up under it. It is in this way frequently, that He makes good the promise of not suffering us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear. He does not lighten the suffering, but He adds to the strength; and, as it were, cradles us, by the education of a severe spiritual discipline, into a state of spiritual maturity. After that the apostles had been threatened by the Jewish rulers to desist from preaching, they did not pray that no more threats might be uttered, or that the power of executing their menaces should be taken away. They did not pray for a deliverance from the outward trial; but for a supply of inward resolution, that they might be upheld against it. "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word." And so with Christians of all ages. They estimate the kindness of God towards them by His spiritual, rather than by His temporal

blessings. They count not that God has separated or withdrawn Himself, because His earthly comforts have abandoned them. The most distressing separation to them were to be abandoned by the aids of His grace. That they fell into suffering, were to them no indication of His faded or expiring regards for them; but, should they fall into sin, this were the sad and sorrowing evidence of an angry or of a withdrawing God. When He puts some dark adversity to flight, this may prove that He has made them to be safe. But higher far when He discharges this adversity upon them, and they come out, of erect and unhurt spirit, from the onset and the uproar of its violence—this proves that He maketh them to conquer, and to be more than conquerors.

The great object in fact with every true Christian, is, not that the life of sense shall be regaled with pleasures or protected from annoyance; but, above this and ulterior to this, that the life of grace shall flourish and advance under all the varieties whether of sensible pain or sensible enjoyment. In the prosecution of what may be termed this higher game, there is at least secured to him that which according to Lord Bacon forms one chief ingredient of human happiness—even heroic feelings or heroic desires. The man you will observe whose heart is thus set, has a loftier aim than those of an every-day character, and he may be said to expatiate in a loftier region. They are certain moral and spiritual points that he tries to win; and that, in the face of certain hurts or hazards to which they are exposed—and in this higher walk

of profit and loss, you will at once see, how wholly dissimilar his engrossments are from those who travail in the ordinary pursuits and speculations of merchandise. It is most true that he may so travail and yet be a Christian; but there is all the distance in the world between him who diligently labours after riches as the ultimate landing-place on which his heart does terminate, and him who while not slothful in business yet fervent in spirit labours to keep that heart with all diligence. They look wholly different ways; and must be variously affected by the same events, according to what that is which mainly occupies them. Now a man is never overset, never plunges into helpless and irrecoverable despair, but on the giving way of that which he holds to be his main interest; and hence you will perceive, that the same visitation of calamity which should make one man feel that he is undone, might give to another a sense of noblest independence—in that he has met the poverty or the pain with a spirit unhurt, if not bettered by the collision; and that, in the triumph of a faith which looks onward and ahead of all that is visible, he can rise superior to the disaster and trample it beneath him.

Ver. 38, 39. Before taking our conclusive leave of this subject, I should like to unfold if I could, how it is that our love to God and God's love to us act and react the one upon the other. There is an ambiguity in the general expression—the love of God—that causes it to be significant of either of these two affections; and we do think, that, in order to arrive at the full spirit and meaning of the passage

which is before us, reference must be made to both of them.

For, in the first place, our persuasion of God's love to us, is of all other things the most fitted to keep alive within us our love to God. It is just in fact the spiritual process of faith working by love. We believe in the love that God has to us, and we love Him back again. It is His good-will to us acting upon our gratitude to Him—a good-will however which must be perceived and trusted in, ere the responding emotion is awakened in our hearts. Apart from the view of Christ, and apart from the conviction of God's good-will to us in Christ, we could not possibly love Him. The heart would be preoccupied with another affection, which should keep love from entering; for if it be true that love casts out fear, it is just as true that fear keepeth out love. Now while the view of God in Christ awakens love, the view of God out of Christ awakens terror. We then see Him as a lawgiver armed to destroy us—a God of sacredness whose hostility against sin is unappeased and unappeasable — a judge sitting in the high state of His affronted dignity, and roused by the jealousies of His holy nature to an act of vengeance on the creatures who had renounced His authority, and cast despite and defiance upon His throne. It is thus that the thought of God stirs up images of dread and disturbance in the bosom, amid which the love of God most assuredly cannot dwell; and it is not till this dark imagery gives place to another view and another aspect of the Divinity—it is not till the Mediator steps between, and we see that economy of

wisdom and grace by which the Law has been disarmed yet the Lawgiver has been pacified—it is not till we behold Him as God in Christ, through whom truth and mercy have met together, and good-will to men has been made most firmly and harmoniously to unite with glory to God in the highest—It is then, and not till then, that the great moral revolution is brought about in the sinner's heart, of a love for that Being whom he before stood afraid of; and of kindest regard for that awful but now amiable Deity, who, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, stands forth in all the graces of His manifested kindness towards a guilty world. Let but this persuasion find entrance into the bosom; and it will clear away the distrust and the alienation, and I will add the hatred, that had before the possession and the mastery therein. It is the exprest persuasion of the apostle in our text. He believed the love of God in Christ towards him; and, retaining this belief in the midst of disasters and of trials which would have shaken the confidence of other men—just as he kept by the persuasion that these dark and lowring appearances did not indicate any separation of God's love from him, so neither did they effectuate any separation of his love from God.

It was the strength of his persuasion in God's love to him, that so settled and secured his love to God. It was because his persuasion in the love of God did not give way, that his love to God did not give way. It was a persuasion brought to the trial and that stood its ground against it—and just by the very force of that sentiment which made Job say, that though He slay me yet will I trust in

Him. There was a storm that might well have made his confidence to falter. There were, in those days, a desertion and a dreariness in the profession of the gospel, by which God meant to discipline the spirit of its converts; but which by the eye of sense might well have been interpreted into the manifestation of His displeasure. And it was because faith prevailed over sense—it was because the persuasion of God's love to him availed the heart of Paul, like an anchor of hope that kept him attached and steady amid the conflicts and fiercest agitations of this world's violence—it was because, like Abraham of old, he staggered not out of his belief, for all that seemed menacing in the persecutions and cruel sufferings of that tempestuous age—it was because, notwithstanding of these, he still held by the confidence that God's love was not separated from him—that neither was his love separated from God.

There was nothing, I have already said, in all these adversities, that could effect the separation of God's love from Paul and his disciples. The very most which they could do, would be to indicate or to make them fancy such a separation—after which, and when driven from their trust, they would lose their hold of the very principle by which their love was alimented; and thus although there was nought in this world's fortunes which could have any immediate effect in separating God's love from them, they might be of powerful effect in separating their love from God. It is not to be imagined indeed, that the creature can have such influential operation on the mind of the Creator, as

to detach His affections from those to whom they had been given; but it may have influence enough upon their mind to detach their affections from Him—after which, no doubt, He ceases His regards from those who have thus cast Him off. Their prayers for aid in the hour of temptation lose all efficacy, because no longer raised with the faith of those who utter them. The love of God in Christ will never fail those who keep a firm and confiding hold of it. But they let go their hold, and so fall away; and thus, not because of the power which this world's fortunes have over the mind of God, but because of the power which they have over the minds of men, there may come to be between these two parties a complete and conclusive separation.

It is on these considerations, that we deem it the best practical way of closing our lengthened elucidations upon this passage, shortly to urge upon you the tendency which there is in the world and in its fluctuations to separate you from God; and how, making head against this tendency, you should retain the love of Him in your hearts, and so retain His love towards you, under all the varieties whether prosperous or adverse of this present scene.

For you will observe, that, in Paul's enumeration of those influences which he stood determined to resist, but which certainly exposed to hazard the steadfastness of his love to God, there is room allowed, not for the assaults of adversity alone, but for the wiles and the blandishments of prosperity. He says that neither life nor death should separate him from the love of God—that neither things present nor things to come should do it—that no

creature of any kind whatever should do it—All giving reason to believe that he had in his eye, what was agreeable to the life of sense and which might seduce our love from God, as well as what was painful or terrifying and which might cause that love to perish in a storm of calamity. And what we now propose is, to attend a little to each of these distinct influences, that you may beware alike of both, and suffer neither the joys nor the griefs of your earthly pilgrimage to separate you from God.

First then as to the effect of that which regales and satisfies the life of sense, in withdrawing our hearts from their love to God. There is nothing, we admit, in it, that should induce the suspicion of God's unkindness or hostility against us—or that should make us cease to be persuaded of God's love to us, and so to uphold the love of our gratitude to Him back again. We may continue to believe as before; and, in as far as faith worketh by love, it may be thought that there is every security we shall love as before. But in regard to the operation of faith upon the character, there is a most important principle laid down by the apostle in one of his epistles to the Corinthians. He there speaks of our believing in vain, unless we keep the truth so believed in our memory. The use of our faith in any truth, is that we may ever be recurring in thought and in remembrance to that truth, for the purpose of our ever and anon keeping its appropriate moral influence close upon the heart. Without this, it would appear, that the faith is of no use to us. There are a thousand things which we at one

time believed, and which we would believe again were they called up to the remembrance, but which now lie as forgotten things in the mind's dormitory. Our faith in them is of no further use. There are many events, through the years that have gone by, of private and personal history, which we believed at the time on the testimony of others—many of which we have read, and read with conviction, in books of public and political information—many propositions of science so demonstrated as to carry our firm assent to their truth, and all of which have now faded and escaped from the memory for ever. We once believed in them, and, were they recalled into the mind's presence, we should believe in them again. But ceasing to be thought of, all their practical influence has ceased also; and the very same holds, and is indeed expressly affirmed by the apostle, of the truths of Christianity. It is of no use that on some one day they have been acquiesced in—if day after day they are not adverted to. Even the death of Christ it would appear loses its efficacy for salvation, if it be not kept in remembrance. And even though we should have once believed the love which God has to us—this, if not dwelt upon in thought and cherised as our habitual recollection, is of no effect to perpetuate or keep alive our love to Him back again.

You will hence understand the hazard to which this affection is exposed from prosperity. It does not make us cease to believe that God has a yet unseparated love to us; but it makes us cease to think of it. We are satisfied with things present, and we look no farther. Or we dwell on the bright

and golden hopes of the things that are to come, and the mind so occupied ceases to have God in its habitual contemplation. It is thus that both things present and things to come, neither of which the apostle was determined should separate his love from God, do in point of fact separate and withdraw the affections of many from Him, who is the fountain of all that they have and all that they hope for. The mind is otherwise engaged than with the thought of Him. The heart is otherwise engaged than with the love of Him. It is taken up with sensible things, and forgets the unseen God on whom they all are suspended. The apostle, by way of contrasting two habits of the soul which are opposite and incompatible, says of one set of men that their conversation is in heaven, and that thence they look for the Saviour; and of another set of men, that they mind earthly things. Now the effect of our prosperity is to engross the mind with earthly things; and to withdraw its conversation and its lookings from Heaven, and from all the benevolence which is there. We cease to love the God whom we have forgotten. He is out of mind, and so out of heart. He is dispossessed as an object of thought, and so is dispossessed as an object of affection. What is not present to our view, is not of power to stir up our emotions; and, not because prosperity has shaken us out of any belief that we ever had in God's love to us, but because it hath stolen us away from the thought of it, therefore our love to Him waxeth cold.

This effect of prosperity in making us forget God and His love, by fastening our regards upon other

objects, is palpably evinced by the state and tendencies of almost every heart throughout the winged hours of a free and festive holiday—when we give ourselves wholly up to the fascination of things present; and, amid the glee and bustle and vivacity of our successive enjoyments, not the futurities alone of an eternal world, but even all the futurities of our earthly pilgrimage are forgotten. We just ask you to compute how much or how little of God there is in the bosom that is thus animated—whether it is not really true, that the exhilarations of such a day banish all thought of Him; and though the lake or the landscape on which you make delighted excursion be of His workmanship; and the happy faces by which you are surrounded be lighted up by a life and a spirit that He has breathed into every moving creature; and all the luxuries by which your various senses are regaled to the uttermost have been scattered from the hand of Him, who hath opened it wide, and poured them liberally forth on the face of a world, which He hath most bountifully stocked and most beauteously adorned—Yet we ask you, on your own recollection of the joyous party and all that gladdened them in the shape of nature's brilliancy without, or the music and the dance and the plenteous hospitality and the costly decorations and the ring of merry companionship within—we would just ask, if, amid the turmoil of all these bright and busy images which are then made to occupy the heart, there has been room during one short minute of the whole protracted gratification for the thought of God as your reconciled Father, of God as the friend to

whom all the glory and the gratitude should arise? Now the life of a prosperous man is one lengthened holiday. His business is the game, and the successful game at which he plays. His rapidly succeeding centages are the stakes that have been won by him, and which lead him onward to bolder adventures than before. His bills and his bargains and his law-suits, are the moves and the checks wherewith he carries the enterprise to a fortunate termination. In launching a speculation, there are felt by him the sport and the high-blown spirit of the race; and, in its run and prosperous return laden with spoils and with profits, there is felt by him all the exultation of victory. Between the gains of the counting-house and the hours of evening enjoyment with his family—between the calls of his urgent business and the delights of his summer recreation—between the season at which he hardly and heartily labours, and the season at which he relaxes amid the beauties of his magnificent retreat and the blandishments of expensive luxury—We see nought in the life of a thriving citizen, but that still its reigning character is that of a busy and protracted holiday—a life taken up to the full with the interest and the urgency of present things—where that which is seen dispossesses the heart of all regard to that which is unseen—where, in the hurry and the splendour and the successive evolutions of one thing to delight and occupy the heart after another, the thoughts of God and of His love are kept at a wide and habitual distance from the bosom; and, without once caring whether the love of God be separated from you, you have,

abandoned your feelings to the force and ascendancy of things present, and so separated yourselves from all love to God.

And in such a life there are not only things present, but things to come, that withdraw our hearts from the love of God. Man lives in futurity. The desire which stretches forth to a distant good has far greater mastery over the heart, than the delight wherewith it regales itself in the good which is actually realised. The charm of a coming prosperity, has more power to fascinate and detain the heart from every other object, than even all the joys of our existing prosperity. The mind is still more engrossed with the prospects of a speculation that is yet afloat, than with the actual proceeds of a speculation that is now terminated. And it is this, I imagine, which must constitute the main hazard to your souls, of that walk on which many who now hear me are to be found—hasting perhaps with too much eagerness after the wealth that perisheth—giving, it may be, every affection and energy within you, to some fancied sufficiency that you have not yet attained, and the possession of which you hold to be enough for happiness—fastening all your thoughts and regards on this object which is placed below, and so of necessary consequence shifting them away from every object that is above—occupying the mind with that which is earthly, and in that very proportion withdrawing the mind from that which is heavenly. We do not suppose that you have admitted a wrong belief all the while into your understanding. If you once gave credit to God's testimony of His

love to you in Christ Jesus, the likelihood is that on the question being put, you will profess the same credit still. You are not sensible of any such revolution in your opinions on this subject, as should either change or in any way impair the orthodoxy of your creed. The thing is credited as before, but it is not attended to as before. When the mind does come into contact with the doctrine, it just entertains it as it wont, and judges of it as it wont; but then it is not so habitually in contact with it as it wont. We do not complain that now you think of it erroneously, but we complain that now you seldom or never think of it at all. The love to you of God in Christ is seldom present to the eye of the mind, because the eye is elsewhere directed; and so it is that your love back again waxes cold. When the good-will ceases to be seen—the gratitude ceases to be felt. The object is not kept in the memory, and so the affection which that object is fitted to awaken is not kept in the heart. When the one disappears the other dies away; and it is this which explains the decline and at length the utter extinction of Christianity with many, whose notions were all evangelical and even continue to be so—but whose zeal, fervent and declared as it may at one time have been, is now scarcely ever felt, just because the things which awaken zeal are now scarcely ever thought of. The man does not understand the things differently from before, but he does not look to it so frequently as before. He is otherwise taken up. The engagements of business have gotten the entire hold of him. The multitude of

his prospects and affairs and brooding speculations wields an entire and absolute mastery over his spirit. He lives under the power of things that are to come, but they are not the things of faith and eternity. They are altogether the things of a perishable world—the coming profits of some goodly adventure—the coming result of some keen and busy negotiation—the coming market, whose sales might elevate his fortune to that of the most affluent and honourable among the citizens. In the turmoil of such engrossments as these, the man has never changed his creed—he has had no time for it. He is every way as sound and evangelical as ever—and if one time the professor of a strict and serious orthodoxy, may he still have a name to live, while in spirit and in reality he is altogether dead. And thus we have not to go back to the apostles' days—that we may witness the power either of present or future things to separate the heart from the love of God. We see the vivid exemplification of it around us; and as much we fear on the walks of peaceful and prosperous merchandise, as in any bygone age of persecuting violence—as much in the seduction of this world's good, as in the terrors of this world's dark and menacing adversity.

But we mistake the matter, if we think that sensible things derive their power to alienate the heart from God, only from the deceit and the blandishment which lie in prosperity. It should never be forgotten, that there is no other way in which we can be made to love God than by our

looking to His love for us—no other way by which we can keep ourselves loving Him habitually, than by our looking at Him habitually. Whatever then withdraws the eye of our mind from Him, will withdraw the regards of our heart from Him; and we just ask you to think, whether the things that distress or terrify the spirit, have not to the full as great a mastery over the attention, as the things that satisfy and regale it. Have not grief for some actual adversity, and fearful anxiety for a coming one, have not these as great a power of engrossment as either the present delight or the bright and joyful anticipations of prosperity? They affect the mind differently it is true; but each may in its turn take up the mind wholly and exclusively, and so be alike mischievous in keeping the thoughts at a distance from God. And it argues an enlightened discernment by Scripture of the human spirit and all its mysteries, that, while it pronounces of this world's riches how they beset the entrance of the kingdom of heaven, it also affirms that there is a sorrow of this world which worketh death; and you do well to notice that in the parable of the sower, where the heart of an engrossed and overcrowded man is compared to the ground that is overrun with thorns, and on which the vegetation of the good seed is stifled and destroyed—you do well to notice, that they are not merely the riches and the pleasures, but also the cares of this life, which choke and hinder from ever coming to maturity the good seed of the word of God.

Such then being the effect of crosses and adversities on your spiritual condition—is it the safe

plan for you as Christians to lengthen out or to contract the line of your exposure to them? Ought you not to pause ere you comply with the invitations for some new enterprise, that shall bring along with it a train of hazards and anxieties and fearful misgivings, ere the termination be arrived at; and perhaps after all a termination of defeat and disaster that may utterly overwhelm you? We know little of the details of your merchandise; but we know enough to affirm, in the general, that, if your means be limited, the field of your operations ought proportionally to be moderate and manageable—that what is true in the business of other things is also true in the business of trade, you ought not to meddle with matters too high for you—that every risk which you cannot meet with your own property, and every daring adventure by which that of others is brought to hazard, should be avoided as unlawful. This much we know; and that nevertheless there is an insidious temptation that is perpetually operating, and by which the ambitious and the unwary are led into a higher game than they are adequate to all the chances of—that oft there is a floating vision which dances before their eyes in the shape of some goodly or gainful speculation, and by which they suffer themselves to be lured into a sea of troubles—that thus their cares and their concerns are greatly multiplied; and the ground on which they stand, now become more precarious than before, is felt as if it tottered under them; and in expedients for putting off the evil day, and shifts for temporary credit, and devices and disguises innumerable, they floun-

der from one difficulty to another—with a heart wholly oppressed and overcharged. Even had fortune smiled on their aerial voyage, there would, as we have already endeavoured to show, have been, in the prosperity that crowned it, an influence to war against their souls. But in the calamity which crosses it, there may lie a tenfold hostility; and when we look to the sadly beset and bewildered man, as he writhes in secret under the necessities that encompass, or ruminates on the sad explosion of disgrace that is before him—when we think of the way in which his heart is occupied, and that positively there is not room in it for any thoughts of God—when we consider thought as the aliment of affection, and that we can only love our Maker in as far as we have time and space for the leisurely and undisturbed contemplation of His love to us—when we compute the manifold distractions of such a misguided individual, and the constant weight or agitation that lie upon his spirits—Then we can no longer wonder, that, in reference to the things of faith and of an eternal world, his soul should have been utterly dispossessed as if by the violence of fierce invaders—that other thoughts and other feelings should wholly monopolize him; and that, with an outset perhaps of seemly professorship, he should at length, because pierced through with many sorrows, have separated between himself and all sacredness, and become an alien and an apostate from his God.

There is danger to your soul from the abundance of this world's cares, as well as from the abundance of this world's comforts; and therefore,

it is that you should avoid all wanton or unnecessary exposure to the former, even as you ought to be vigilant and sedate and sober-minded amid the blandishments of the latter. That there is a power in earthly sadness, as well as in earthly joy, to dispossess the heart of its love for God, may be exemplified by what we sometimes see in a case of forlorn widowhood. It has occurred that the sufferer under such a bereavement has been irrecoverably woe-struck, and so abandoned herself to helpless and hopeless melancholy—wholly unable to lift her spirits up from their dejection, and, with a determination somewhat like impracticable sullenness, utterly refusing to be comforted. That under a grief so immeasurable and absorbing there are very many things which now cease to interest her, is not marvellous; but what most indicates the dispossessing power of this affection, is that now she should cease to love her own children—that even to those whom nature had so powerfully endeared to her, her heart has become cold and alienated; and, immovably fixed as it is on the departed object of her tenderness, all its affinities with present objects have been broken. This is rare we admit; but it proves what force of separation there is in grief, if, even once or at any time, the strong parental attachment has been thereby dissevered: And much more does it prove how possible it is, that an affection at all times so slender as that of love to the unseen Deity, should give way under the power of a similar visitation—how in grief for the loss of fortune, there might be a force at least equivalent to that of separating us from the love of

God—how that which though rarely is the cause of a literal suicide inflicted upon the person, may frequently be the cause of a moral and spiritual suicide inflicted upon the soul; and so, by hasting to be rich, have many fallen into temptation and a snare and erred from the faith; and, just because they pierced themselves through with many sorrows, have they also drowned themselves in destruction and perdition.

If then there be danger to the soul, both from success in business and from its crosses and misfortunes—what, it may be asked, should they who are immersed in the prosecution of it do? Not withdraw from their callings certainly; but so regulate and restrain and rectify, as that their callings shall not withdraw them from the love of God. There must be a way of being not slothful in business, and yet of being fervent in spirit; and, lest we should be charged for having dealt in this important question with generalities alone, let me conclude with one plain and practical direction to you. The thing which separates your love from Christ, is, that, with so much of the earthly to think of, you think but little and perhaps never of His love to you. What I hold to be indispensable for the preservation within you of spiritual life, is that you clear out for yourselves a season, and that too a frequently recurring season, of contemplation and prayer. In the constant appliance of sensible objects and sensible interests to your heart, all the grace that is in it must wither and decay; and, unless you take up the sentiment of the apostle, and desire with him, that neither things present nor

things to come, neither the pride and prosperity of life nor the death of all our worldly hopes, nor any creature whatever shall have power to separate you from the love of Christ—your religion may perish, amid the many urgencies by which you are surrounded. What I hold to be your peculiar necessity is, that you so arrange as frequently to escape from these urgencies. It were well that you had many a breathing-time, and for this purpose it is not enough that your Sabbaths be hallowed to the exercises and the studies of sacredness—you should have many a hallowed moment through the week—you should have a morning and an evening sacrifice—you should train your spirit to the work of oft retiring within itself, and oft raising up its faculties that it may lay hold of God. Even in the heat and bustle of the day there might be room for the occasional aspiration; and though nought more disparaging to Christianity than to fancy it a religion of days and forms and stated punctualities, yet, beset and occupied as many of you are, I hold that the highest principle, as well as the highest prudence, is involved in your set and regular observations of sacredness. The soul might else move adrift among the countless influences that are ever and anon bearing upon it; and such is the actual opposition between all the things which are in the world and the love of the Father, that the drift is away from God. To recover those thoughts of God and Christ which the world would dissipate—along with the stray thoughts to recall the stray affections, and so maintain and constantly renew a fellowship of heart with the Father and the Son—

to light again and again the flame of sacredness within, and so to keep it from expiring utterly—to lift yourselves from the deadness and degradation of the things that are beneath—I am aware of no better expedient than that you have your times of communing through the Bible and prayer with the things that be above, and that you determinedly adhere to them. Let not the urgencies of business separate you from those precious minutes, which you should give to the remembrance of God's love to you in Christ Jesus; and then the fortunes of business, whether prosperous or adverse, shall not be able to separate your hearts from that love which you owe to God in Christ Jesus back again. Pray unceasingly for His grace to overcome the world, and you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you.

It is high time to break away from this world's entanglements—to dispossess your heart of things present, and turn them to the things that are to come; and that not to the coming things of your earthly pilgrimage, but, overleaping these and the death which is beyond them, to look onward to the awful realities which lie upon the other side. If you have not yet made the movement from the habit of walking by sight to that of walking by faith, it is a movement which must be made ere you die—else the life eternal, which is only to those with whom all old things have been done away and all things have become new, you shall never never realise. And it concerns you all to understand, that, by every day of postponement, you are getting more helplessly implicated in the slavery of sense and of sin than before—that if you seek not first

the kingdom of God, every other thing which you seek and set your affections upon just widens your distance from Him the more—that the love of all which is in the world separates and alienates the heart the more irrecoverably from Him who made the world—that thus in every footstep you make, there is a farther departure from the Being whose favour is life, but whose frown is endless and irremediable destruction: And, more particularly, may every fresh speculation in which you engage, and that constant trooping of successive cares and hopes and interests from one mercantile engrossment to another, so multiply the ties by which you are rooted and fastened down to a perishable scene—that when at length overtaken and torn forcibly away from it by the last messenger, you shall be found to be wholly of the earth and altogether earthly—overrun with carnality, and having a full part in the saying that the carnal mind is death. I ask you, not to be hermits and to abandon either the world or its business, but I ask you to be aware of the evil of it. I ask your instantaneous and habitual recurrence to the objects of faith, that the objects of sight may no longer have the ascendant over you. I ask you so to retire and separate yourselves from the love of things present, that you may not be separated from the love of God—not to give up the use of the world, but so to use it as not to abuse it—not to cast away from you the good things of this life, but, by your habitual regard to the better things of another life, to strip them of their power, so as that they shall not be able to separate you from the high interests of an accountable and imperishable creature.

LECTURE LXVIII.

ROMANS, ix, 1—3.

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

The matter of which Paul here makes such strong asseveration, is not one that could be looked upon by the eyes of those whom he addresses; but one that himself only could take direct and immediate cognizance of. It had not its residence without, so that others should have access to it by any faculty of external observation; but had its residence within—within the repository of the apostle's own bosom, and he only had access to it by the faculty of conscience. He could not therefore say of it—this is true, for come and see that it is so—he could not thus make his appeal to the senses of other men, for no other earthly eye was upon it than that of his own mind. He therefore had recourse to the only expedient which those in general have, who feel that a certain suspicion attaches to their testimony, and who have no additional testimony wherewith to confirm it—even that of strenuous and repeated affirmation, 'I say the truth, I lie not.'

But Paul, in this necessary defect of human witnesses, does make mention of other witnesses

and which he seems at least to appeal to. He does not simply assert that he says the truth, but that he says it 'in Christ;' neither does he simply quote the testimony of his conscience, but his conscience as bearing him witness 'in the Holy Ghost' —most competent witnesses assuredly to the matter here spoken of, seeing that both had thorough insight into the recesses of the human spirit— Christ knowing what is in man—the Holy Ghost searching all things, and how much more the things of man, when He searcheth even into the deep things of God.

In our readings of the Bible, we often acquit ourselves of the task very currently; and are apt to speed our way over whole phrases, without being at all arrested by any thought or feeling of their significance—and that too with a book where there is nothing insignificant. The introduction of Christ and of the Holy Ghost in this verse, has perhaps with most of us never stirred up any enquiry into the mind and meaning of the apostle, when he thus refers to them. We recognise their names as well-known sounds, that are quite familiar to the ear; and the understanding therefore not startled, as it were, into vigilance, by any strange or rarely uttered vocable, remains asleep and insensible to the thought which lies couched in the phraseology of the apostle. It is thus that it fares, we apprehend, in very many instances with the Bible —that this mine of precious things is passed over without being entered into—that, full though it is of truth and of meaning throughout all its clauses, there is little drawn out of it by the daily perusals

of the mere formalist in Christianity, who, satisfied with running his eye over the pages of Scripture, obtains no view whatever of the richness that is underneath; or who content that with his mouth he should pronounce the language of inspiration, although with his mind he never touches or comes close to the realities which that language embodies, is truly one of those to whom the kingdom of God cometh in word only and not at all in power.

It was for the sake of Christ that Paul made departure from the great body of his countrymen. It was to win Christ, that he counted all the honours which his zeal and his talent might have earned for him among the Jews, and all the pleasure which he had enjoyed in their society—that he counted them but loss in his estimation. They looked on his association with Christ, as the act by which he had broken friendship with them. He had at least, however, given full evidence of his sincerity by it. He had relinquished all hopes of earthly preferment, and had braved all the terrors of persecution. In speaking of his truth in Christ, he spake of that by which his truth was most nobly accredited. His being in Christ was that which gave the fullest possible demonstration of his own uprightness; and, in the face of the Jewish apprehension that because the friend of Christ he was an enemy of theirs, he in that very name affirms his desire for their eternal welfare to be the most urgent feeling of a bosom, which still felt all its wonted affinities to his countrymen, and glowed with all its wonted affections towards them. And besides, the joining of that name to an affirmation was tantamount to the

confirming of it by an oath. It was a name, they might well have known, which he never could have associated with the utterance of a falsehood; and so, to overcome the impression which obtained among the people of his own nation, as if he had lost all his ancient and natural regard for them, he appeals to that very Jesus for whose sake he had abandoned the faith of his countrymen, in support of his solemn averment that he had not abandoned any part of that friendship which he ever entertained for them.

There must be also a meaning which he intended to convey, when he spake of his conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost. It is competent for any man's conscience to take notice of any urgent or strongly felt affection that might be at work in his bosom—as, for example, of the great heaviness and continual sorrow that was in his heart. It needs not the special intervention of any divine or supernatural agent to inform a human creature, whether it be joy or sadness or anger or fear that is the occupant of his heart for the time being; and we should therefore like to find what the precise addition was, or what the peculiarity which distinguished it from a mere ordinary intimation of conscience, when Paul's conscience bore him witness in the Holy Ghost.

Apart from the force which the very mention of Christ and of the Holy Ghost gives to this asseveration of the apostle, as if calling upon them to be witnesses of its truth, and so giving to his utterance all the sanction and solemnity of an oath—apart from this, there is conveyed to us by the phrase in

question, that the Holy Ghost was at the time of this affirmation in Paul—that it had to do with his conscience while it testified of that which was in the heart of the apostle, and had to do with his heart by putting and upholding that affection in it of which his conscience bare witness. The fruit of the Spirit it is said is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. It is by the last of these fruits, by the truth which it puts into the inward parts, that it both enlightens and directs the conscience. It acts by enabling the conscience to look more clearly on its own proper field of observation—by shedding a greater brightness and legibility on the lineaments of that inward tablet whereon are graven all the characteristics of a man's soul—whether that soul be now an epistle of Christ, so that in reading it we examine ourselves and ascertain that we are indeed in the faith—or it still bears the unaltered inscription of original and unrenewed nature, so that in reading it we become convinced of sin. It is thus, by revealing to the eye of conscience the real condition of the inward parts, that the Spirit performs the office either of aiding in the work of self-examination, or of convincing a man of sin ere he becomes a Christian. And He not only makes truth known to the conscience, but He makes the man who professes to utter the intimations of this conscience to be strictly observant of the truth—so that the man whose conscience bears him witness in the Holy Ghost, is both a man who is not deceived himself in regard to the real nature of his own internal feelings, and neither would deceive others when he reports what these feelings are.

But further, the Holy Ghost not only enabled him clearly to apprehend the affection by which he was actuated, not only guided him to make true and faithful declaration thereof—but gave him the affection itself; and, in virtue of His fruit being goodness as well as truth, put into him that good and gracious distress which so overweighed his spirit when he bethought him of the spiritual condition of his own countrymen. What would have been a natural in others, was in the heart of Paul made by the Holy Ghost a sanctified affection. There was something most natural, and I could almost add justifiable, even in the pride of Jewish patriotism—for never was a nation so distinguished; and never had a people, even among those whom history has most gorgeously blazoned in all the honours of ancestry and of great achievement, such marvellous distinctions to boast of. All the trophies of conquest and of literature and of all earthly renown, make not out a crown of traditional glory for any of the states or monarchies of other days, which is at all like unto that crown of transcendental glory, that halo from heaven, which sits on the character and the fortunes of the children of Israel. There is nought in the sages, and in the warriors, and in all that is recorded either of the prowess or the philosophy of any other land, which serves so to irradiate its name,—as the name and the land of the Hebrews are irradiated by their patriarchs and their prophets and their holy men of God. The traveller, whose imagination has been sublimed among the historic remembrances which he saw around him in the classical territory

of Greece and Rome, has confessed a deeper visitation of awe and of lofty emotion, as he walked over the priestly and consecrated land of Judea. Even the very humblest of that outcast race, kindles in the recollection of his own ancestral dignity, and feels a sort of conscious superiority to other men—when he thinks of himself as one of that selected nation whom seers did instruct, and whom angels visited; and that they were forefathers of his, who heard from Sinai's flaming top the words of the Eternal. Paul seems to have felt some such patriotic inspiration—as he made mention of the Israelites to whom pertained the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises—whose, he says, are the fathers; and of whom, so far from having lost all sense of their nobleness by having become a Christian, he sums up this heraldry of his nation by what he deemed the brightest of all its ensigns—even that of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever, amen.

It may serve to guard you against a delusion—should you, on this subject, make the proper distinction between that which was natural and that which was spiritual in this patriotic affection of the apostle. The former might be deponed to by an ordinary intimation of the conscience—the latter is wholly the work of the Holy Ghost; and can only be manifested to the man who has it, by the conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost. It will perhaps make the distinction between these two things all the more palpable—if we only ask,

what this high and heavenly ingredient has at all to do with those compositions of our recent poetry known under the title of 'Hebrew Melodies.' It has truly nothing to do, either with the genius and enthusiasm of those who framed them, or with the delighted admiration of those who listen to and perform them. The poetry, the pathos, the music, the beauteous and touching imagery, the recollections of domestic tenderness, the resolves and the vows of lofty patriotism—these are natural feelings, and must all be put down to the account of nature. But it follows not, ye sons and daughters of song, alive though ye be to the fascination of these touching numbers, that, because you kindle at the inspiration of genius, you have any part in the inspiration of Heaven. It is not for us to pronounce on the Christianity of the men who emanated these magical effusions; but we affirm it to be possible of the very man whose hand has so embellished these sacred themes, that in his heart there might not have been a particle of sacredness. And so with you, who melt in all the luxury of emotion over these strains of ancient psalmody; and which only now, when set to the cadence of modern versification and the music of our modern drawing-rooms, have become strains of enchantment.

Ver. 2. 'That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.'

But to return from this digression. In the heart of Paul, we have no doubt, that both the natural and the spiritual were blended; and, in the estimation of unconverted men, the former might of itself account, for the great sorrow and

continual heaviness that was in his heart. He felt for the overthrow of such a nation. He had sympathy for its fallen greatness. It would seem, from the enumeration that he has made of its glories, as if its proud and prosperous days had passed in recollection before him; and he could not but mourn over the prostrate condition that awaited it, when it should be trodden under foot of the Gentiles, and become the outcast and the mockery of all people. He would have sorrowed, and that most profoundly, although he had felt no more than other Hebrews feel, because of their dispersed nation, their ruined temple, their profaned and desolated sanctuary. The sadness of nature would have been enough to overwhelm him in such a contemplation; but the heart of our apostle was weighed down by a still more oppressive sadness. He was not insensible to the sorrows of wounded patriotism, but his were the deeper and more distressful sorrows of reflecting piety. He sorrowed for his countrymen after a godly sort. He had his eye upon their rejected souls, their now hopeless salvation, their undone eternity. And of far more bitter endurance to him than even the slaughtered hosts and the captive families of Israel, was the miscarriage of his heart's fondest desire for them that they might be saved.

Ver. 3. 'For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.'

Whatever be the precise import of those terms in which the apostle here expresses his affection for the Israelites, there is one thing of which there can

be no mystery or mistake—and that is, the strength and exceeding urgency of the affection itself. The circumstance of their being his kinsmen according to the flesh, gave him a special interest in their welfare; and the interest which he thus felt was mainly directed to the welfare of their immortality. On whatever other question criticism may stumble and go astray, there can be no misunderstanding of this. The literal sense of the verse may in one thing be somewhat unintelligible. But its moral and spiritual expression is altogether obvious. We have here the longing earnestness of an apostle after the salvation of his countrymen; and those sympathies of kindred, which in the hearts of ordinary men lead but to earthly gifts and earthly services, we see them in the instance before us taking a heaven-ward direction, and prompting the efforts and the expostulations and the prayers of this great Christian minister—not for the temporal but the everlasting welfare of those to whom he stood related by the affinities of blood. We cannot doubt the strength of these affinities, even in the hearts of the veriest children of this world; and that innumerable are the kindnesses and charities of domestic life, to which they give rise. We cannot refuse, even to unsanctified nature, those warm and benevolent affections which have their living play in the bosom of almost every family, and by whose workings it is that the society of earth is upheld. The lesson of the text is not that we should love our relatives, for this is what untaught and instinctive humanity can do. But to love the souls of our relatives—this comes

of something higher than the motives or the tendencies of spontaneous nature. Any man's conscience may bear him witness that he has a parent's instinctive fondness for his own children; but, ere he can vouch with truth for a regard at all so strong or so lively to their imperishable souls, there must be a higher agent than nature at work with him. Ere he can say it with truth, he must say the truth in Christ—Ere his conscience bear witness to it, it must bear him witness in the Holy Ghost.

But let us dwell at greater length on this phenomenon of character and feeling—for it is in truth an exhibition of humanity, most pregnant with inference, and fitted more especially to prove how wide an interval there is between the things of sense and the things of sacredness. The agony of an infant's dying-bed is not more real, than the agony inflicted by it on a mother's bosom. The sufferings endured by the one have not a more stable or undoubted certainty, than the sympathy which is felt for them by the other. They alike belong to man's sentient nature—in virtue of which there is scarcely a parent to be found, who bears not in his heart a thorough devotion to all the earthly interests of those who have sprung from him; and shares not in all the distresses, to which, by pain in their bodies, or disappointment in their fame or in their fortunes, they as earthly creatures are exposed. In other words, all that belongs to our sensitive economy which is taken down at death, is most feelingly sympathised with; and what we affirm is, that, with all that belongs to our spiritual economy that survives death, there

might be no concern and no sympathy whatever. After all then, this tenderness for relatives might at the very best be but a mere animal sensibility —an instinct, which has just as little of fellowship with the things of faith and of eternity, as has the similar instinct of any inferior creature. And it is indeed most striking to observe, under how many a parental roof, all the amenities of nature's charity and of nature's care are absorbed, and have their full termination in earthliness—how, while the bodily wants of every little nurseling is most tenderly provided for, it is forgotten all the while that their spirits are imperishable—how, amid all the sighs and all the tenderness of family affection, scarce one effort is ever made to secure and scarce one alarm is ever felt lest they should fall short of a blissful eternity—So that while we, alive at every pore to all that is present or visible in the condition of our children, do watch over their sick-beds, and weep over their tombs—we rarely ever think of those fearful possibilities, which, on the other side of death, may still be in reserve for them; and seldom does the dread alternative of their future hell or their future heaven cost us one moment's agitation.

That such is experimentally the fact, we have, I am persuaded, the responding testimony of many a conscience among yourselves; and melancholy as the contemplation is, we should like to prolong it through one or two lectures more, for the sake of those practical uses to which it is subservient.

LECTURE LXIX.

ROMANS, ix, 3.

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

And first, it may be employed to rectify that meagre theology which is so far satisfied with man as he is, that it would hold a few slight and superficial amendments to be enough of themselves for changing him into man as he ought to be. This is one use to which we should turn what we have just observed of the parental affection. The earthliness of its whole drift proves man to be a creature altogether earthly; and the very strength of the affection serves to aggravate this lesson the more, and to betray all the more palpably our state of spiritual destitution. That the same parent who is so intent on the preferment of his children in the world, should be so utterly listless of their prospects, nor put forth one endeavour to obtain for them preferment in heaven—that he who would mourn over it as the sorest of his family trials, should one of them be bereft of any of the corporeal senses; and yet should take it so easily, although none of them have a right sense of God or a right principle of godliness—that he, who would be so sorely astounded did any of his little ones perish in a conflagration or a storm, should be so unmoved by all the fearful things that are reported of the region on the other side of death,

where the fury of an incensed Lawgiver is poured upon all who have fled not to Christ as their refuge from the tempest, and they are made to lie down in the devouring fire and to dwell with everlasting burnings—that to avert from the objects of our tenderness the calamities, or to obtain for them the good things of this present life, there should be so much of care and of busy expedient, while not one practical measure is taken either to avert from them that calamity which is the most dreadful, or to secure for them that felicity which is the most glorious—Why there is indeed such obvious demonstration in all this of time being regarded as our all, and eternity being counted by us as nothing—so light an esteem in it of that God, an inheritance in whom we treat as of far less value for those who are dear to us than that they should be made richly to inherit the gifts of His providence—such a preference for ourselves, and for the fleeting generations that come after us, of the short-lived creature to the Creator who endureth for ever—As most strikingly to mark, even by the very loves and amiable sensibilities of our hearts, how profoundly immersed we are in the grossest carnality—that after all it is but an earthly horizon that bounds us, and an earthly platform we grovel on—that Nature, even in her best and most graceful exhibitions, gives manifest token of her fall, proving herself an exile from Paradise even in the kindest and honestest of the sympathies which belong to her—that, retaining though she does many soft and tender affinities for those of her own kind, she has been cast down and degraded beneath the

high aims and desires of immortality—accursed even in her moods of greatest generosity, and evil in the very act of giving good gifts unto her children.

But another lesson than that of rectifying the meagre theology of the general public, is that of rebuking those peculiar few who disown this theology, and hold themselves to be sound in the faith. We greatly fear, that, in many instances, this soundness in the faith is little more than a holding of the form of sound words. The expression of the truth is acquiesced in, but the truth itself is not realised. A mere holding of the dogmata of a creed is not faith. It is not the substance of things hoped for, neither is it the evidence of things not seen. The man who looks onward to some station of emolument for his son, who provides him with the best education to qualify him for its duties, who himself superintends the preparation and strenuously plies him with the fit exercises for his training and future habits, who bestirs himself in the work of securing friends and soliciting patronage—this man may be laudably employed, but he is walking by sight. To look onward for your children to a place in heaven—to enter them accordingly into a process of spiritual education—to watch and examine and labour, until the spiritual principles be established and the spiritual character be formed in them—to besiege in prayer the upper sanctuary, that you may obtain the patronage of the great Intercessor who is there in behalf of your family, and through Him the grace and liberality of the King upon the throne—Let me practically see this, and I would

say of it that it was walking by faith. It is not the mere verbiage of an orthodox phrascology that constitutes you a believer. You believe substantially only if you do. It is not by the professing of these things that you show faith. It is by proceeding on the reality of these things. The man, upon whose work and upon whose walk the futurities of the unseen world have the same deciding power, as the futurities of the seen and the sensible world that is before him—he it is who has the substance and not the shadow, the faith unfeigned. It will show itself in the regulation of the family, as much as in any other of his personal affairs. The man whose heart is set on the conversion of his children—the man whose house is their school of discipline for eternity—He it is, and we fear he only of all other parents, who lives by faith. If you love your children and at the same time are listless about their eternity, what other explanation can be given than that you believe not what the Bible tells of eternity? You believe not of the wrath and the anguish and the tribulation that are there. Those piercing cries that here from any one of your children would go to your very heart, and drive you frantic with the horror of its sufferings, you do not believe that there is pain there to call them forth. You do not think of the meeting-place that you are to have with them before the judgment-seat of Christ, and of the looks of anguish and the words of reproach that they will cast upon you, for having neglected and so undone their eternity. The awful sentence of condemnation—the signal of everlasting departure to all who

know not God and obey not the gospel—the ceaseless moanings that ever and anon shall ascend from the lake of living agony—the grim and dreary imprisonment whose barriers are closed insuperably and for ever on the hopeless outcasts of vengeance —These, ye men who wear the form of godliness but show not the power of it in your training of your families—these are not the articles of your faith. To you they are as the imaginations of a legendary fable: Else why this apathy? Why so alert to the rescue of your young from even the most trifling of calamities, and this dead indifference about their exposure to the most tremendous of all? O, the secret will be out. The cause bewrayeth itself. You have not faith; and, compassed about though you be with sabbath forms and seemly observations and the semblances of a goodly and well-looking profession, yet, if you labour not specifically and in practical earnest for the souls of your children, your doings short of this are we fear but the diseased and lame offerings of hypocrisy—your Christianity we fear is a delusion.

Let me therefore, in the third place, charge it upon parents, that they make proof of their own Christianity by looking well to the Christianity of their children. They profess the rewards and the glories of Paradise to be the noblest objects which an immortal being can aspire after. To these objects then, let them guide the ambition of those young immortals who are under their own roof; and, instead of regarding them as the inmates of a habitation that is to last for ever, let them be treated as passengers in the same vessel with themselves

—as fellow-voyagers to an eternal home. In the work of their common preparation for such a home, let them never cease to ply the household with their precepts, or to ply Heaven with their prayers. Paul travailling in birth that Christ may be formed in his converts, is fit to image forth the effort, the assiduity, the intense moral earnestness, wherewith parents should long and should labour for the conversion of their children. Be assured that this is an object for which one and all may be instant in season and out of season; and that no application, however pointedly directed and however urgently borne home on the consciences of any of your offspring, if under the guidance of that wisdom which winneth souls, is too much for an achievement so precious. O remember that under the roof of your lowly tenement, there might happen an event which shall cause the high arches of heaven to ring with jubilee; and that surpassing far the pomp of this world's history, is the history of many a cottage home—at which a son or a daughter turned unto righteousness becomes the reward of a parent's faithfulness, the fruit of a parent's prayers.

But—fourthly—let me not forget that the affection of Paul, as expressed in the passage before us, was not that of a Christian parent for his children, but that of a Christian man for his kinsmen in general. It was in love for the souls of all his relatives, that he could have endured any sacrifice by which he might have procured salvation to them. It was an affection which went round the whole circle of his relationship; and, under the impulse of which, we would not confine our apostolic zeal

and activity to the single object of Christianising the young of our own family, but would lay ourselves out for the souls of others of our kindred—whether they lived with us under the same roof, or exchanged with us the visits of a familiar and frequent hospitality. And we cannot look upon this extension of the duty, without adverting to a most powerful and a most peculiar obstacle in the way of it—a certain mysterious delicacy, most deeply felt in many a bosom, though most difficult to be analysed—a repugnance so much as to talk of Christianity in the hearing of parents or brethren or more distant relatives, in the spirit of religious tenderness—and a repugnance that would almost strengthen into a moral impossibility, did we propose to urge upon them the Christianity of their own souls. However undescribable this antipathy is, yet we are confident of our speaking to the inward experience of many, when we affirm the existence of it; and that in truth it is often stronger and more sensitive far in reference to our own kindred, than in reference to any of our more distant and general companionship. The solitary Christian of that household, where all but himself are yet carnally-minded and of the world, feels as if spell-bound among the entanglements of an insuperable delicacy; nor can he find utterance at all for the things of sacredness, among the parents and the sisters and the other inmates and daily familiars even of a much-loved relationship; and the seriousness, wherewith his heart has of late been visited, lodges there in solitude and in silence—as if ashamed to disclose itself in the midst of a now

uncongenial society; and, marvellous to tell, it can experience a greater freedom and facility of religious converse with the irreligious neighbours, than it can with the religious members of his own family. And thus, by an explicable peculiarity of temperament, do the nearest of relatives often maintain on that topic which most nearly concerns them, a dead and immovable silence, and which for the world they cannot break; and though posting on to eternity together, yet on all the prospects and all the preparations of eternity their lips are sealed; and while on every other partnership, whether of interest or of feeling, there is the frankest and the easiest communication—yet, on this mightiest interest of all, each wraps himself in his own impregnable disguise, and positively dares not lay it open. It is so very singular, that it almost looks like a satanic influence—a sorcery by which the prince of darkness obstructs this sort of reciprocal interchange in families, lest his kingdom should suffer by it—a device by which he guards the very approaches of religious conversation; and so scares even the devout and desirous Christian away from it, that he stands speechless and awe-struck even in the presence of his own brother. It is indeed a curious anomaly of our nature, and might well excite to philosophic speculation; but it has a higher claim upon our notice, in that it stays the operation of the gospel leaven among men, and forms one of the sorest impediments to the growth of Christianity in the world.

We feel the whole difficulty of advising in a matter which so many have found to be unconquerable,

and yet, formidable as the difficulty is, we cannot help being assured of this as of all other temptations—that if you resist the devil he will flee from you. We are persuaded that had you only courage to break the accursed incantation, a most cheering and triumphant result would often come out of it. It is our conjecture that by a frank and intrepid management of the case, it would in many instances have an issue more pleasing and more prosperous than we at first do apprehend. We believe, that, did you openly avow to your kinsman according to the flesh the recent awakening that had come upon you, and did you pour into his ear the affectionate urgency of your now Christianised regards for him —there might ensue a gratitude and a confidence that to your old and previous fellowship was altogether unknown. We are hopeful, that, by taking the direct way with that relative whom you want to associate with yourself on the path of heaven, and telling him plainly both of sin and of the Saviour—that in his kindliness to you, and perhaps in the conversion of his own soul, your fearlessness and your faithfulness would have their reward. We have no doubt, that, did every Christian come forth in the bosom of his own household with more bold and explicit testimonies, we should at length have vastly more of Christianity in our land; and that, did our love for souls and our sense of the worth of eternity so far prevail as to force a way for us through the tremors and the delicacies of this our mysterious nature, we should at times realise within the precincts of home the noblest achievements of the missionary. That there would be a frequent, and

even perhaps on occasions a fierce resistance, is unquestionable; and then the generous adventurer for human souls would be put upon his charity and his wisdom. "Give not that which is holy unto dogs," and "cast not your pearls before swine," these are the precepts which might afterwards have their turn when he had acquitted himself of the duty to confess Christ before men, and proved himself not to be ashamed of His testimony. Yet even in suffering and in silence he would preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and perhaps more emphatically than if with all eloquence and all argument. Let but the meekness of wisdom never abandon him—let peace and truth and kindness be at once the guide and the ornament of his walk—let him command that homage to his practice which he failed to obtain for his principles—let him carry that admiration for the virtues of his life which by the doctrines of his creed he could not carry—And thus what he did not by his expostulations, he might do by his example and by his prayers.

It were well that we had a conscience altogether clear in this matter—that we stood fully acquitted of what we owe to each other's souls—that we could lay our hands upon our hearts; and say that we had done all which we ought, for the purpose of rescuing from the delusion that is unto death, him who is ready to perish—that we held faithful and intrepid discourse with our fellow-pilgrims on the high topics of eternity; and did whatever wisdom could approve, even among those that are without, for awakening them from the lethargy of nature, and impressing that movement upon their spirits by

which they might turn from the world unto God. We know that there are difficulties and delicacies in the way; but we also know how gladly it is that many a desirous Christian takes shelter under them. We know that the formal attempt to Christianise has often misgiven; and that there have been occasions, when the whole effect of a rash and misguided enterprise has been just to call forth from the heart the reaction of a stouter and more resolute hostility than before. And, upon this consideration, there are men, even of religious earnestness, who have exonerated themselves from the task of religious conversation altogether. Now there may in this be a guilty cowardice. God knoweth. There may, in this inveterate silence before men, be the cruellest indifference to the fate of their eternity. The benevolence of nature may expatiate among all the kindnesses and courtesies of the life that now is —while the benevolence of faith is most profoundly asleep to the momentous interests of the life that is to come. In a word, because of our criminal reserve, souls may have perished everlastingly; and, just because Christianity is left out by us in conversation, many perhaps there are who have been confirmed in the habit of leaving it out of their concern altogether. Surely that which even the friends of the gospel deem not worthy of a place among the other topics of science or of taste or of politics or of trade or of agriculture, which take their respective turns in every party—we may well deem not worthy of any large or very prominent place in the general system of our affairs. It is thus that by our shrinking timidity, a countenance

is given to that spirit of worldliness wherewith the earth throughout all its companies is overspread; and, just because Christians are not so free and frequent in their avowals as they should, the mischief is propagated more widely and settled more inveterately than before. We are aware, at the same time, that evil might ensue from unbridled and unreasonable urgencies of talk upon this subject; and that there is a time to refrain, as well as a time to venture forward. It were well, however, if amid the excuses and exonerations of which we are so fain to avail ourselves, we, like Paul, could vouch to our own consciences for the perfect sincerity wherewith we longed after the salvation of those who are around us. He could speak for himself in this matter—his conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost. This heavenly judge is now looking towards us; and, agreeably to that impressive passage from the book of Proverbs, He knows whether to charge us with the barbarity that would neglect the means of averting from others their awful and everlasting condemnation. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest Behold we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth he heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

It were well if what I have said should subserve, not merely its own proper and immediate purpose, but should serve the purpose of a general conviction regarding the state of your own souls. Ere you can be practically in good earnest about the

eternity of your children, you must have in your own spirit a sense of the worth of eternal things. Ere you can labour for the good of their immortality, there must be a faith in that immortality—even the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Ere you can make a distinct and business object of their conversion from sin unto the Saviour, you must be imprest with the guilt and danger of the one, as well as the all-sufficiency of the other. And, on the other hand, your habitual listlessness in the matter of family religion, is an experimental proof that you are destitute of all these things. From a thing so familiar, as just your domestic and daily habit in reference to those of your own house; and from a thing so accessible, as just the state of your own heart in regard to the affection which it bears for the souls of your children—from these we may gather the evidences, we fear, of the entire spiritual destitution of many who are here present. In urging the Christian duty which lies upon you of watching over their souls, we feel as if we had to go back to a duty more elementary still—that is, of fleeing, for yourselves, from the wrath that shall come upon all those of carnal and unrenewed nature, who have not yet made the transition from death unto life; nor taken refuge in that Saviour whose blood alone can make atonement for the past, whose Spirit alone can revive and rectify the future.

LECTURE LXX.

ROMANS, ix, 3.

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Before bidding a final adieu to this topic on which I have at such a length detained you, I may take notice of another interesting aspect which it opens to our view. You will observe that the fervency of affection professed by Paul in this passage, is all in behalf of his own countrymen; and yet none more zealous and more indefatigable than he, in the labours of a Christian missionary among the distant climes and countries of the world. What gives more importance to this remark is the tendency in our own day to place these two causes in opposition to each other—as if they were conflicting interests that could not both be befriended by the same heart, or helped forward by one and the same hand. It might serve as a useful corrective, to look at Paul and at the one comprehensive affection which actuated his bosom—cleaving with utmost tenacity, and with all the devotedness of a thorough patriot, to the families of his own land; and yet carrying him abroad and beyond the limits of a contracted patriotism, among all the families of the earth. The truth is, that home and foreign Christianity, instead of acting upon the heart like two forces in opposite directions, draw both the same way—so that he who has been carried forward

to the largest sacrifices in behalf of the one, is the readiest for like sacrifices in behalf of the other—The friends of the near being also, as they have opportunity, the most prompt and liberal in their friendship to the distant enterprise—recognising in man, wherever he is to be found, the same wandering outcast from the light and love of heaven, and the same befitting subject for the offers of a free salvation. We cannot therefore sympathise with those who affect an indifference to the Christianization of the heathen, till the work of Christianization shall have been completed at our own door. Let them be careful, lest there do not lurk within them a like indifference to both—lest the feelings and the principles of all true philanthropy lie asleep in their bosoms; and they, unlike to Paul who found room for the utmost affection towards the spiritual well-being of his own kinsfolk and the utmost activity among the aliens and idolaters of far distant lands, shall be convicted of deep insensibility to the concerns of the soul, of utter blindness to the worth of eternity.

It holds out indeed a marvellous exhibition of our nature, that, with such dread realities as the death and the judgment before us, we should be so unmoved by any fear for ourselves and by any sympathy for our fellow-men—that such should be our heedlessness or our hardihood, that we can drown every gloomy anticipation; and spend whole hours of joyous companionship with those whom yet, according to our own principles, we still deem to be in the abyss of impenitency—that we can view them as on the brink of a precipice whence they are to

be engulphed in irreversible wretchedness and woe; and, without so much as a friendly whisper by which to warn them of their state, can thus while away the precious intervening moments in the jest and the song and the various other fascinations of a free and festive society—that even they who wear the semblance of a more declared and ostensible seriousness, can so lend themselves to a deep and ruinous illusion—and be the instruments of cradling into a still profounder infatuation than before, those familiars of their own who are speeding merrily onward to a hopeless and undone eternity. It is not that we are wholly destitute of feeling—for often they are the very men with whom we should not only rejoice when placed beside them at the hospitable board, but with whom we should weep in the hour of their dark and distressful visitation—stretching forth a hand of ready assistance in the midst of their difficulties, and bearing in our bosom a heart of kindest sympathy towards them. What other possible explanation can there be then for a phenomenon so glaring, than that we are destitute of faith?—and did the Saviour now descend to the judgment amongst us, and did the sound of the last trumpet bring the world to a pause, we fear, we fear that, even in this age of goodly profession and of gathering respect for the forms and the doctrines of godliness, there might be room for the question which Christ put to His disciples, "Verily, verily, when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith upon the earth?"

We now come to a less important matter—the difficulty which occurs in the third verse of this

chapter, where Paul says that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Before however attempting our solution of it, on which by the way we lay no great stress, let us premise one observation on the subject of those occasional puzzles in Scripture, which have often exercised and sometimes even baffled all the ingenuities of criticism. We are aware of the objection that has been founded on them, as if they threw an air of hopeless and impracticable mystery over the pages of inspiration —as if they were utterly at variance with the character which the Bible assumes, and which infidels say it should better have supported, of being a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path—as if they darkened that road to heaven, of which it is written that a wayfaring man though a fool should not err therein—and as if they made the faith of Christians to rest on the precarious foundation of controversies that never can be settled, of hard and enigmatical sayings that never can be satisfactorily explained or clearly understood—Thus throwing a painful suspicion over the whole record of Christian doctrine; and reducing those who are carried about by every wind of new and fanciful interpretation, to the state of ever learning and yet of never coming to the knowledge of the truth.

Now it might serve to disarm this objection, did we compare the real value of that which is palpable with that which is hidden or obscure in the passage before us. Grant that this imprecation of Paul upon himself does resist all our attempts at explanation, and abide an unsolved mystery in our

hands—shall we therefore say of the casket which holds it, that any moral or intellectual treasure it may contain is useless to us, because locked in the concealment of a disguise that is impenetrable? Whatever we may make of the terms by which he expresses his affection, is not the affection itself patent as the light of day? Can the most unlettered reader here mistake the high worth which an apostle sets upon eternity? This at least stands forth most unequivocally, along the course of these few sentences. The sense of one little clause may be under shade, but the sentiment of the whole passage is most broadly and openly manifest. The longing of the apostle's heart after the salvation of his countrymen—the largeness of the personal surrenders that he would make to obtain it—the impressiveness of all this in the way of excitement and example to ourselves—the entire moral and practical force of the lesson which is thus held forth to us—Of these we have a most fully lucid exhibition—nor are we aware that any critical solution of the difficulty in question, would at all sensibly or materially add to the power of them. In other words, within the limit of these verses there is enough of revelation for the conscience, though not enough perhaps for the curiosity of the reader. The spirit of them might be caught by the very simplest of Christ's disciples, although in the letter of them there may be a something to baffle our profoundest commentators. We have tried to expound some of the obvious instruction wherewith this passage is replete; and if there be not enough in it to satisfy the ambition of that knowledge which puffeth

up, there is at least enough in it to light up in every soul the glorious inspiration of that charity which edifieth. There may lie within its confines a yet undeveloped mystery, even as there is a spot in the sun which sensibly impairs not the force or the splendour of that luminary. And so, in the words of doubtfulness upon which we at present have alighted, there is nothing that can obscure the general character of the whole—nothing to cloud or to enfeeble the expression of its great principle; or that can in any way dim the manifestation of that Christian philanthropy, which so blazed forth in the soul of our devoted apostle, whose heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they might be saved.

Now we need not have stopped perhaps for the utterance of such an observation, did it not apply to the whole Bible. It cannot be denied that in this book, there are some things hard to be understood; and that the intellect of man is still kept at bay, by some of its yet unravelled difficulties. And still, notwithstanding, it may be as fit an instrument for the general illumination of our species—as the sun, with all the partial obscurations which lie scattered over its surface, is fit for being the lamp of our world. For, in truth, with all its occasional difficulties—it, in every great lesson which it concerns man to know, shines forth with most unambiguous splendour. Who, for example, can misunderstand the high power and presidency which it throughout ascribes unto God—the subordination in which it places all creatures to their glorious and sovereign Creator—the great moral characteristics

of truth and consistency and awful sacredness which it everywhere assigns to Him—His deep antipathy to sin, and the sad ruin which has followed in the train of this plague and destroyer of our species? And the grand scheme of man's recovery; and the mission to our world of that great celestial Being who is at once its author and its finisher; and the tidings of a purchased forgiveness in His name; and the offered aids of a Spirit to begin and to perfect that repentance, without which we shall all likewise perish; and the great lessons of faith, and of charity, and of heavenly-mindedness, and of self-renunciation, and of crucifixion to the world that now is, and of living in the hope of a better and lovelier world that is beyond it, and of grateful dedication to the Saviour, and of piety to God, and of peace and truth and unbounded kindness among all our fellows, and of long-suffering in the midst of provocation, and of hallowed purity not in speech or in action only but in the secret imaginations of the heart—these, whether in the shape of doctrine or of duty, are all written as with a sun-beam on the page of Revelation: And, let the occasional blots or shadings of a darker cast be what they may —these give an overruling splendour to the whole mass and assemblage of those materials whereof this book is composed. And thus again, like the glorious lamp of heaven, is this Spiritual Sun a light that may enlighten all lands. The prying telescope of the astronomer may find spots upon the one, which nevertheless casts a broad effulgence among the habitations of men. And the keener scrutiny of critics or commenators may lead to the

view of difficulties in the other, which nevertheless escape the notice of ordinary readers, who find enough of guidance in its general illumination for the business of their souls. And many is the unlettered peasant who rejoices in the light thereof. It has translated him out of darkness; and he feels surrounded by an element of sufficient transparency, both for the direction of his footsteps and for the irradiation of his hopes. It may not be an altogether unclouded luminary, yet a luminary of force and light enough for all people—providing them with a medium of noon-day through which they may walk, and casting a general brightness and beauty over the whole field of their spiritual vision.

And striking indeed is the difference in point of manifestation, between the accomplished theologian who has nothing but the light of erudition to carry him through the Bible, and that simple Christian in whose mind a light has been struck out between the doctrines of Scripture and the depositions of his own conscience—between him who can argue from Greek the doctrine of the atonement, and him who believes it to be true because he discerns it to be the very aliment that is needed by his soul—between the scholar who is convinced by his study of its proofs, and the sinner who is convinced by his feeling of its preciousness. The one sees his Bible to be true by the light of a by-gone history—the other sees it to be true by the light of a present consciousness. To him belongs a deeper scriptural wisdom than all scholarship can bestow—a wisdom grounded on his perception of the internal evidence, as made known by the adaptations of all the doc-

trine which is without to all the felt necessities of the spirit which is within. That is no visionary evidence which is thus evolved between his readings of the Bible and the responses of his own heart. It is as stable and satisfying, even to the eye of intellect, as the other; and is as much more impressive as the vivacity of sentiment surpasses the coldness of mere speculation.

After these general remarks I shall not take up so much of your time with the critical solutions which have been offered of the difficulty in the letter of the passage, as I have done in attempting to unfold and to impress upon you the undoubted spirit of it. We hold it to be a triumphant vindication of the Bible from the charge now adverted to—that while the letter is occasionally shaded with obscurities, which however by dint of scholarship are gradually clearing away, yet, in the whole spirit of it, all is direct and intelligible and decisive. In other words, there can be no mistake in regard to that which is really of most importance; and if, at times, the curiosity of man should be left unappeased—yet that far higher principle of our nature, even the conscience of man, is never left without the most explicit and satisfying light on all which concerns, either a Christian's peace with God, or the regeneration of his heart and his walk before Him. Be assured, that it is not he whose curiosity is all alive to the difficulties of Scripture, while his conscience is asleep to the clear and impressive simplicities thereof—who is the most hopeful of its disciples. And I shall therefore count it enough,

if you have caught the inspiration of the apostle's ardour in behalf of human souls, and feel how incumbent it is both to long and to labour for the good of their immortality

I accordingly do not hold it necessary, to detain you by the solutions which have been given of the difficulty in the verse that is before us. If understood in the strictly literal sense of the English into which it has been rendered, it would be startling enough—for, high and heroic as the virtue of a devoted patriotism is, we could never reconcile our feelings to a sentiment so monstrous, as that of wishing oneself to be eternally damned, were it possible to obtain by this step that others should be eternally saved. We are required to love our neighbours as ourselves, but this were loving them better than ourselves—besides involving in it somewhat like the impiety of a voluntary exile from God and enmity towards Him, and that everlastingly. The common interpretation that is given of this passage, though by no means the unanimous one, is, that the word anathema in the original, and which we read here accursed, was the technical expression applied to that sentence of excommunication by which the members of the Hebrew church were put forth of its communion, and so made outcasts from all those privileges on which the countrymen of the apostle set so high a value. He had become the member of another church that had distinct privileges of its own; and whereof the Jews would naturally imagine that Christians must have the same preference, and hold them in the same sort of exclusive regard which themselves felt for

the proud distinctions of their own establishment. They would think more particularly of our apostle, that, in renouncing the one, and passing over to the other, he exchanged one set of privileges for what he of course did conceive to be nobler and higher privileges still; and Paul meets this imagination by assuring them, that there is not a privilege belonging to the Christian Society as a visible church upon earth, which he would not give up most willingly if they were only to take up his place, and enter into the fellowship from which himself had been cast out. It is not that he would give up his final salvation, but that he would give up all which was short of his final salvation—that, for example, he who made himself all things to all men if by any means he might save some, would make every lawful approximation in order to reconcile his countrymen to Christ, even though in doing so he should give such offence to all other Christians, as to bring about his own expulsion from their society. He would consent to all temporal infamy and suffering —rather than that his compatriots the Jews should persevere in their obstinate rejection of the Saviour, and incur that awful destruction which he saw to be approaching. He was addressing himself in fact to men who in a great degree were strangers to the conception of a spiritual economy, or of those its spiritual privileges which had their chief place and fulfilment in eternity. Apart from these altogether, the expression of the text had all the strength which it could possibly have to a Jewish understanding, although Paul's imprecation upon himself was felt to extend no farther than to the loss of

those present distinctions which belonged to him, while in communion with the Christian church, and as a recognised member of the Christian society. It is somewhat in this strain that commentators have attempted to vindicate this effusion of the apostle—though after all it may not be capable of full elucidation. There might really have been a distempered extravagance in the mind of the apostle upon this subject, even as there seems to have been in Moses, when, pleading for the forgiveness of the children of Israel, he offered himself as an expiation for their sins. "Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not blot me I pray thee out of the book which thou hast written." The proposal met with rebuke and resistance in the answer that was given to it—"And the Lord said unto Moses, whosoever hath sinned against me him will I blot out of my book."

Before leaving this part of the subject, I may just take notice of an interpretation which I do think the original admits of, although not much insisted on by Scripture critics. The translation really appears more literal, when, instead of being rendered 'I could wish,' it is rendered that I did wish that myself were accursed or separated from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. This signification has the further advantage of being historically true. Paul at one time did for the sake of his countrymen, did, for what he conceived to be the honour and the good of his nation, embark in a most resolute opposition to Christ and to His faith, and would gladly have consented to be in a state of everlasting disunion from

Him: And this it is quite pertinent to quote now, in proof of the affection which he still retained for the children of Israel. He appeals to the zeal manifested then in their behalf; and assures them that the same spirit, misdirected though it was at a former part of his life, of fervent and devoted attachment to those of his own nation, still remained with him—although under the guidance of other views, and now directed to other objects. It is analogous to other appeals made by the apostle, when called to make his own vindication. "I have served God with all good conscience unto this day." "This I confess to thee, that so worship I the God of my fathers—believing all the things which are written in the Law and the Prophets. And then in this place, I protest that I have great heaviness of heart, for on your account, I did indeed wish myself separated from that very Christ, whom now I press upon your acceptance.

LECTURE LXXI.

ROMANS, ix, 1—10, 12.

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac,...it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger."

VER. 4. 'Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.'

After the utterance of his affection for the Jews, he enters upon the record of their distinctions; and to no nation under the sun does there belong so proud, so magnificent a heraldry. No minstrel of a country's fame was ever furnished so richly with topics; and the heart and fancy of our apostle seem to kindle at the enumeration of them. They were first Israelites, or descendants of a venerable patriarch—then, selected from among all the families of the earth, they were the adopted children of God, and to them belonged the glory of this high and heavenly relationship; and with

their ancestors were those covenants made which enveloped the great spiritual destinies of the human race; and the dispensation of the Law from that mountain which smoked at the touch of the Divinity was theirs; and that solemn temple service where alone the true worship of the Eternal was kept up for ages was theirs; and as their history was noble from its commencement by the fathers from whom they sprung, so at its close did it gather upon it a nobility more wondrous still by the mighty and mysterious descendant in whom it may be said to have terminated—even Him who at once is the root and the offspring of David, and with the mention of whose name our apostle finishes this stately climax of their honours—'of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever.' Amen.' They are far the most illustrious people on the face of the world. There shines upon them a transcendental glory from on high; and all that the history whether of classical or heroic ages hath enrolled of other nations are but as the lesser lights of the firmament before it.

Ver. 5. 'Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever. Amen.'

We do not insist upon this very unequivocal expression of our Saviour's divinity, in proof of the doctrine. This is not necessary, for in every simple and unsophisticated mind an instantaneous belief must be lighted up—provided only that the Bible is held to be true. There is a delusion to which the controversial style of almost all our theology has given rise—that our chief business with

every doctrine of Christianity is to prove it. Now this is not true. Our chief business with every doctrine is to proceed upon it. To bring it home to our conviction, there may be often, as in the present instance, no need of argument—for it may effectually be brought home, and that immediately, by a simple and authoritative statement. And it is a deep practical delusion, that after you have lodged a truth in the understanding where it lies stored among the other articles of your orthodoxy, your concern with it is all over; and you may now regard it as a matter settled and set by. Now, instead of this, your concern with it is only yet beginning; and, so far from being done with it because you now have reached a faith in its reality, that faith is but the commencement of those various influences which it is fitted to have upon the heart and history of a believer. The effect of our controversial theology is to make us regard the doctrine itself as the ultimate landing-place, at which when we arrive we may go to rest. But in Scripture, instead of the place at which we land, it is in fact regarded as the place from which we start. A doctrine is never revealed to us merely for its own sake. It is for the sake of something produced by itself, and therefore ulterior to itself. In the contests of human authorship, the terminating object is to gain the intellect of man to some doctrinal position. In this book of divine authorship, the intellect is but the avenue through which a new impulse may be given to his affections, or a new direction may be impressed upon his conduct. And thus the divinity of our Saviour, so far from

being but one of the articles or abstractions of a metaphysical creed, is proposed to us in the Bible chiefly for the moral and spiritual account to which it is capable of being turned; and, agreeably to this, let us very briefly advert to two of those lessons which may be urged upon you from the consideration that Christ is God.

The first lesson is that of condescension to those of lower estate than ourselves. This is the very lesson which the apostle urges upon the Philippians; and it is just for giving enforcement and a motive to this plain and practical and every-day morality of the Christian life, that he announces to us the divinity of the Saviour. He brings down this mystery from heaven, for the purpose of lighting up by it a mutual kindness between man and man upon earth—So that in his hand, instead of being as in the hand of Athanasius a firebrand to burn up and to destroy, it is that mild and peaceful luminary, which sheds over the face of human society the radiance of a virtue the most beautiful and the most gracious. "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves;" and "look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others;" and "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

It is for the enhancement then of this moral lesson, that we are told of the dignity of that Personage who lighted upon our world, and that on an errand of beneficence and mercy to its sinful generations—that it was not the visit of some fellow-subject from some distant place of the creation, but a visit from the Sovereign Himself, who owned all creation as His monarchy, and upholdeth all the things that are therein by the word of His power—that the earth which we tread upon was on that occasion honoured by the footsteps, not of angel or of archangel, but by the footsteps of God manifest in the flesh—and that He, in bowing Himself down to the lowliest offices of humanity for our sakes, did so for the purpose of an example as well as for the purpose of an expiation, even that we might look on no living and created thing as beneath the notice or the condescension of our services. The distance upward between us and that mighty mysterious Being who let Himself down from heaven's high concave upon our lowly platform, surpasses by infinity the distance downward between us and any thing that breathes. Under the impulse of such a contemplation, not only might the lordliest of us all condescend to the wretched and worthless of our own species, whom either misfortune or crime has made the veriest outcasts of humanity; but we feel ourselves carried by it beyond and beneath the limits of our species, and that it should extend the compassionate regards of every Christian over the whole of sentient and suffering nature. The high court of parliament is not degraded by its attentions and its cares in

behalf of inferior creatures—else the sanctuary of heaven has been degraded by its counsels in behalf of the world we occupy; and in execution of which the Lord of heaven Himself relinquished the highest seat of glory in the universe, and sojourned amidst contempt and cruelty and contradiction of sinners in this its humble and accursed territory. By our benevolence to all that is beneath us, we only imitate the glorious munificence that is above us; and though we have now lingered for such a time upon these few verses, that even the beauties of a lesson so delightful must not tempt us to expatiate any further—yet we cannot refrain from one observation on the contrast which is suggested by it between the theology of the Bible, and the theology although made up of the very same doctrinal positions but urged by human expounders in the spirit of a fierce and intolerant dogmatism. That article of faith which in the one theology is a moral principle, and carries us forward at once to its moral application, so that we instantly find ourselves in the midst either of the most easy and familiar graces, or of the most noble virtues by which our nature can be adorned—undergoes in the other theology a transmutation into a thing of another air and aspect altogether, a dry hard ferocious metaphysical dogma, glaring frightfully upon us with an eye of menace, and set round in characters of dread and denunciation against all who shall refuse to fall down and worship it. This is not the way in which the triumphs of genuine orthodoxy are won; and the man, who exemplifies the godlike virtues of Him who is at once our God and Saviour, will do more to recommend the truth

as it is in Jesus, than the stoutest and sturdiest polemic who has nought but the armour of controversy to brandish in its cause. The benign condescensions of a Howard who went about continually doing good, will do more to accredit that evangelical system which he embraced so cordially, than the boisterous invectives of a Horsley—even with all the might and momentum of that polemic arm which he lifted in defence of it. It is not that his victory was doubtful, or that on the field of conflict with his adversary he did not achieve a most signal and conclusive triumph. But it was a triumph on the arena of intellect alone; and there is not a truth in Christianity, which is not divested of more than half its power to convince and conciliate, if, propped up only by argument, there is no exhibition given of its mastery over the affections and the principles of our moral nature. It is not by the warfare of argument, but by the meekness of wisdom, that we obtain the conquests of the faith. It is when urged in the gentle and peaceable spirit which is from above that truth is omnipotent, instead of being urged in that wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God.

The second lesson is founded on the subservience of this doctrine to the peace of the believer, even as the first is founded on its subservience to his charity. We have already said that the divinity of Christ enhanced the worth of His example, in those condescending services which He rendered to the world. We now say that His divinity enhanced the worth of that expiation, which to us is the most precious of His services. However unfathomable in all its depth, that mystery might be which angels

desired to look into, certain it is, that the most unlettered Christian can apprehend a sufficiency, and can draw a comfort from the reflection that the Saviour who died for him was God. There is none, we deem, who has ever trembled at the thought of that offended sacredness against which he has sinned, who has not felt a most significant and a most substantial consolation from the thought that there is an equal sacredness in the atonement which has been made for sin. There is none who has been duly arrested by a sense of that guilt, against which the truth and the justice and the holiness of the divinity are all leagued together for its everlasting condemnation; who, if a solid and satisfying hope have arisen from the midst and the profoundness of this despair, does not feel that it is intimately linked with the divinity of Him, who poured out His soul unto the death—even that the world's guilt might be washed away. That the dignity of the sacrifice which has been made is commensurate to the dignity of the law which has been violated —that the force of the divine wrath against moral evil has had the force of a divine propitiation to neutralise it—that if the sin of the transgressor brought forth an arm of infinite strength to destroy, the sacrifice for sin is one of such prevailing force and efficacy as to have brought forth an arm of infinite strength to save him—In all this, my brethren, there is something more than the unmeaning jingle of a mere sonorous or scholastic antithesis. There is many a disciple who feels it to be the very aliment of his confidence and peace, that Christ is God over all blessed for ever, Amen

Ver. 6. 'Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel.'

He had just said of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, that they were Israelites; and that to them belonged the promises. And yet it might appear that these promises had not been verified upon them—seeing that they were on the eve of being rejected by God, for that by this time they had rejected His Son. This calls out the apostle to a vindication of God's truth in the promises which He had made of old respecting this people. His word in these promises had not failed in its effect, although the whole of nominal Israel should not be saved. All the descendants of Israel were named after his name; but that did not constitute them to be of the true Israel—in like manner as he had said before that he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.

Ver. 7. 'Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.'

The promise was given to Israel—yet it no more followed from this that all the descendants of Israel should have an interest therein, than that all the seed of Abraham should be included in the fulfilment of the promised blessing—because, when announced to him at the first, it was nakedly and generally expressed, without any restriction of it

to one part of his seed more than to another. In the twelfth chapter of Genesis, it is stated that the Lord appeared unto Abraham and said, that "unto thy seed will I give this land." Yet we afterwards read in the twenty-first chapter of a very numerous division of his posterity, who were to have no part in this inheritance, even the descendants of Ishmael—"for in Isaac shall thy seed be called," and the bondwoman and her son were cast out accordingly. This part of the Old Testament history is adverted to in another of Paul's epistles; and for the very purpose of illustrating the distinction between the nominal and the true Israel, between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise, between the earthly Jerusalem which then subsisted in the bondage of her yet unextinguished ritual and the Jerusalem which is above and is free—and so of vindicating that great step of the divine administration, by which so many even of Israel's natural descendants were put forth of God's spiritual kingdom, and admittance was given to the men of other tribes and other families.

Ver. 8. 'That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.'

The object of the apostle is to break down that confidence in the flesh (as he terms it in his epistle to the Philippians) by which his countrymen were so generally blinded; and in virtue of which they arrogated so much of what might be termed a religious nobility to themselves, just because of their literal descent from the patriarch Abraham. To meet and rectify this imagination, he goes back with

them to their own primeval history. He first shows how Isaac superseded Ishmael—how the child of faith, born out of due time and in opposition to all the likelihoods of nature, superseded the child of ordinary descent and in whose birth there was nothing of the miraculous—thereby giving one instance of a disinheritance that God had passed even on the posterity of the patriarch in whom they gloried; and of another posterity being formed for him in virtue of a gracious promise on the part of God, and of a faith in that promise on the part of man. It is thus that he laboured, by such types and symbols as their own history furnished, to bring down the arrogance of those who vaunted in Abraham as their father, and said "we be his seed and were never in bondage to any man." It is thus that he prepared the understandings of those whom he addressed for another disinheritance—even of those who grounded all their imagined privileges on a carnal obedience, and sought not to be justified by faith. And it is thus also that he typified by Isaac, the child of promise and given out of the course of nature and experience to that patriarch who against hope believed in hope, all those who shall afterwards walk in the steps of faithful Abraham, and become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus—who are born again, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Ver. 9. 'For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come and Sarah shall have a son.'

In this verse he specifies the limitation that was actually made on the general promise unto Abra-

ham's seed,—whereby the descendants of Ishmael, although they could plead the same natural relationship to the patriarch, were nevertheless excluded from that more close and peculiar relationship to God, into which he was pleased to admit the descendants of Isaac.

Ver. 10, 12. 'And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac . . . it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.'

He here states a further limitation, and shows still more strikingly of how little avail the general promise given at the first was, for all and every of the descendants of Abraham. There might appear a good natural reason why Isaac should be preferred before Ishmael—the son of the wife before the son of the bondmaid; and besides, as this preference took place after their births and after the insolent behaviour of the one in mocking the other, it might warrant the idea that his rejection was a thing of desert and of moral government, and not a thing of absolute and antecedent sovereignty on the part of God. It therefore brings this out more unequivocally, when the election is made between two children of the same mother; and, moreover, when, in opposition to the natural claims of seniority, the elder is rejected and the younger is chosen. There is even something in this latter peculiarity, that might be made to bear on the fulfilment which took place in the days of the apostle, when the first were made last and the last first; or, in other words, when the Jews that ancient people were rejected, and God, in the course of His now more advanced

administration, chose the Gentiles in their place. This was matter of prophecy and preordination anterior to the birth of the children, as is evident from the intimation of God himself to Rebecca, of which we read in the book of Genesis. And as by the former instance of a limitation on the general promise, the apostle teaches that the children by faith and by miraculous regeneration have the preference over the children of nature—so, by the present instance, he rather points to the sovereignty of God. In looking to the one, we are led to connect an admission into the great spiritual family with the new birth that takes place in men upon earth. In looking to the other we are led to connect it with the mysterious counsels and destinations of eternity, with the high purposes of God in heaven.

Thus much at all events is clear in the apostle's argument. There was a promise given to Abraham in regard to his posterity; yet one branch of that posterity was rejected without invalidating the truth of the promise. After this first restriction the promise was to the seed of Isaac; yet one great division of his offspring was also rejected, without those Jews against whom the apostle now reasoned deeming the promise to have been at all violated. Last of all it was restricted to Jacob or Israel; and what the apostle argues is, that a still further rejection might take place even of his descendants, and yet God not be chargeable with having uttered a promise that was of none effect. As with all the former and successive excisions that were made on the posterity of Abraham, still a portion was

reserved on whom the promised blessings had their verification or their fulfilment—so, in the tremendous excision that was about to take place by the utter destruction of the Jewish polity, a remnant might be saved. And not only so, but by movements yet undisclosed in the womb of futurity, and by the new light which these should evolve on the sense and bearing of the ancient prophecies, might there be evinced such an enlargement of the family of Abraham, as should harmonise with all the former passages of Scripture history in regard to it, and, so far from falsifying, shed a lustre of consistency and truth over all its declarations.

I have the feeling on this part of our chapter, that, without a very extended comparison of passages both in the Old and the New Testament, which were more properly addressed through the medium of authorship to a student in his closet than from the pulpit to a listener in the church, I cannot make full exhibition of those mystic harmonies between the one and the other, which, though less obvious to the general eye, are, to the devoted enquirer after the truth and meaning of the sacred volume, both most satisfying and most precious; and which serve to convince him that it is one wondrous design which runs through this composition of many ages—one great presiding spirit that has harmonised and that actuates the whole. We feel most thoroughly persuaded, that, without entering upon the regions of fancy at all, even the most literal and sober of our ordinary Christians, if he only give time and patience to the study, will reap the most substantial conviction of a marvel-

lous, a supernatural accordance between the two dispensations; and that, as on the hand he will find even the books of Moses to be impregnated with gospel—so, on the other hand, he will find the doctrine which apostles taught, after being visited with the light and enlargement of Pentecost, to be but the expansion of an earlier dawn, the development of truths that were dimly shadowed forth in the imagery of the Mosaic ritual. We ask but the perseverance of his attention, and without any aid from the imaginative faculties of his nature, we promise him the discovery of many traces and analogies that are now hidden from his eyes; and which, as evincing that the one economy has given its impress to the other, will, at the same time, evince that both are the productions of a loftier and more recondite wisdom than that of man, and that both have proceeded from the same author. And this holds, not alone in the peculiarities of the Jewish ceremonial, but also in the passages of the Jewish history—which things, says the apostle of one of its plainest narratives, are an allegory. It is thus that the age of our earliest patriarchs was but the morning of a lengthened day, whose gradually increasing light shone more brightly along the track of its advancement; but still shone on the same truths now disclosed to the eye in fuller manifestation—even as the sun in the firmament has not altered the landscape on which there rested his twilight obscurity a few hours before, but only invests the same objects in a clearer element of vision, only irradiates the whole more gloriously.

And I might here advert to a very frequent experience of Christians; and that is their growing relish, as they advance in life, for the types, and the prophecies, and the sketches of character, and the strains of olden inspiration, and the many beauteous passages of most pleasing and picturesque history, and the description of that whole machinery even to the minutest parts in it of Israel's figurative or symbolical church, which are so abundantly met with in the Old Testament. Even those stories which wont to charm them in early boyhood, while they preserve all the delight of this association, now recur to them with the force of an augmented interest, because they now see them to be throughout pervaded by the character and the meaning of their own spiritual dispensation. Like the disciples of Emmaus their hearts burn within them, while their understandings are opened to understand these scriptures; and when recognising Christ in every page, they are made to behold the bearing and the significancy of the things which are written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Him. Very pleasant as to the mind of good Bishop Horne were the songs of Zion, when every morning called him anew to their study, and every evening found his spirit more satisfied than before with their richness—very pleasant to many a humble Christian, are the things which God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. It is as if the delights of imagination were superadded to the delights of piety, when the doctrines of the New are beheld in

the drapery of the Old dispensation; and if there be any aged here present, who, exempted from the cares that engrossed the morning or the middle of their days, can now afford to live and to look more heaven-ward than before—we promise them, not a different gospel in the earlier from what they have found in the later scriptures, but the same gospel seen through a veil of ever brightening transparency, and heightened by the zest of many dear and youthful remembrances. It is thus that, in the study of the Old Testament, the faded spirits, the dim and the decaying lights of age have been revived again; and in the solace and satisfaction of its repeated perusal, they have experienced of the things that be recorded there, that they are written, not alone for older generations, but for our admonition also to whom the latter ends of the world have come.

We are aware that some will concur with us, in looking upon these as the befitting studies of age, just because they regard all typical and all prophetical interpretations as so many senilities—even as Voltaire, in the examples which he has quoted of the aberrations of the human understanding, along with the case of Roger Bacon having written upon watchcraft, brings forward also that of Sir Isaac Newton having in his declining life written a commentary upon the book of Revelation. Now fully admitting, as we do, that manifold have been the visions and the vagaries of those who have adventured too far either on the field of prophecy or in the work of spiritualising the Old Testament, yet we confidently affirm, that none can enter upon this walk of contemplation with intelligence and

candour, without being satisfied of a most substantial accordancy between the Old and the New Testaments—that they are indeed the two witnesses of Heaven speaking the same things; and, instead of emitting such cross lights as are fitted to bewilder the eye of the observer, they are the two candlesticks which man hath not planted, but which stand before the God of the whole earth. And as to our great philosopher, who transferred his mighty intellect from the study of the works of God to the study of his word, this may have taken place at the decline of his years, but not most certainly at the decline of his understanding. The truth is that he felt a kindredness between his old and his new contemplations—that after having seen farther than all who went before him into the godlike harmonies of the world, he was tempted to search and at length did behold the traces of a wisdom no less marvellous in the godlike harmonies of the word—that after having looked and with stedfastness for years on the mazy face of heaven, and evolved thencefrom the magnificent cycles of astronomy, he then turned him to Scripture, and found, in the midst of now unravelled obscurities, that its cycles of prophecy were equally magnificent—and whether he cast his regards on the book of Revelation or on the book of Daniel, who, placed on the eminence of a sublime antiquity, looked through the vista of many descending ages, and eyed from afar the structure and the society of modern Europe, he, whose capacious mind had so long been conversant with the orbits and the periods of the natural economy, could not but acknowledge the footsteps of the same presiding divinity in the still higher

orbits of that spiritual economy which is unfolded in the Bible. And while we cannot but lament the deadly mischief, which the second-rate philosophy of infidels has done to the inferior spirits of our world; we feel it an impressive rebuke on their haughty pretensions, that all the giants and the men of might in other days, the Newtons and the Boyles and the Lockes and the Bacons of high England, have worshipped so profoundly at its shrine. But chief of these is our great Sir Isaac, who, throned although he be by universal suffrage as the very prince of philosophers, is still the most attractive specimen of humanity which the world ever saw; and, just because the meekness of his Christian worth so softens while it irradiates the majesty of his genius: And never was there realised in the character of man so rare and so beauteous a harmony, that he who stands forth to a wondering species of loftiest achievement in science, should nevertheless move so gently and so gracefully among his fellow-men—not more honoured for the glory he won on the field of discovery, than loved by all for the milder glories of his name—his being the modest the unpretending graces of a child-like nature—his being the pious simplicity of a cottage patriarch.[1]

[1] It must be owned however, that with all the sound philosophy which he evinced in the general question of the Christian evidences—even as Bacon did in the general view which he gave of the methods of investigation—So, as the latter failed in his more special disquisitions on the particular phenomena and laws of Nature—did the former alike fail, there is good reason to believe, in his understanding both of particular texts in the Bible, and particular doctrines of Christianity.

LECTURE LXXII.

ROMANS, ix, 11, 13—24.

"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth....As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

We have read these verses at once and together, because of the one principle which runs through them all—even the unexcepted sovereignty of God, in the exercise of which He is so absolute, and at the same time so incomprehensible. Many of you will recollect, that, in former parts of this epistle, the same doctrine met us on our way; and that we

at the time bestowed very lengthened discussion upon it. To revive that argument in all its fulness, merely because months have elapsed since its delivery, would, in fact, be making a barrier of this passage through which we should never find our way, and compelling ourselves to be for ever stationary. I must therefore be content with as summary a recapitulation as possible, that we may be enabled, ere taking leave, to bring not merely this passage but also this chapter to a conclusion. My apology, as heretofore, for meddling at all with a topic that is deemed by many to be so stubborn and so hopeless, is, that we really are not at liberty to blink any of those informations which the Scripture sets before us; and if, on the one hand, we should not go out of our way to meet a theme that has been so burdened with controversy as this—neither ought we to go out of our way to shun this theme, whenever obtruded upon our notice as it is here in the record of the counsel of God. While I have already endeavoured to grapple with such difficulties as I hold to be conquerable in this high argument—I will frankly confess, what the other difficulties are which appear to me beyond the treatment of human strength or human sagacity to deal with; and before which we should bow in silence, till the mystery of God is finished and made known to us. We think that the passage now read, brings that line of demarcation into view, which marks off the one set of difficulties from the other; and it is our honest aim in the management of this question, instead of ministering to the gratification of an idle or speculative curiosity, so to shape our observa-

tions as that they shall recommend the gospel of Jesus Christ to the free acceptance of all, and have a bearing on the great interests of practical godliness.

The first point then which we have already laboured to impress is, that there is no such thing as chance or contingency in any department of nature—that this principle so readily admitted in regard to the world of matter, should also be extended to the world of mind—that if the one have its laws of motion and its regular successions and its unvarying processes, the other has its laws of thought and of feeling; and, in virtue of these, has all its processes alike regular and alike unvarying—that in neither is there ought so monstrous as an event uncaused, or coming forth of the womb of nonentity without having a progenitor in some event that went before it; and if not uncaused then necessary, having the same certain and precise dependence on something preceding itself which the posterior has on the prior term of any sequence—So that the phenomena of thinking and feeling and willing and doing in the spiritual department of Nature, do as surely result from the previous constitution which has been given to it, as any of the varied phenomena in the material department result from its constitution. According to this view, the history of our species may be regarded as one vast progression, carried forward by definite footsteps; and with the state of each individual as surely fixed at every moment of time by the laws of mental nature, as is the situation of any planet above or of any particle of dust below

by the physical laws which are established in the material world. This is that doctrine of philosophical necessity, whose ablest advocate is President Edwards of America—a clergyman of whom we might have feared that the depth of his philosophy would have spoiled him of the simplicity that is in Christ, did we not recollect that it is not against all philosophy that we are warned in the Bible, but only against vain philosophy; and of whom we might have feared that his transcendent ability for science would have hurt his sacredness, did we not recollect that it is not all science which the Bible denounces, but only the science that is falsely so called: And it does reconcile us to the efforts of highest scholarship in the defence and illustration of our faith, when, looking to Edwards, we behold the most philosophical of all theologians, at the same time the humblest and the holiest of men—the most powerful in controversy with the learned, and yet the most plain and powerful of address to the consciences of a plain unlettered congregation—the most successful in finding his way through the mazes of metaphysic subtlety, and yet the honoured instrument of many awakenings, the most successful in the work of winning souls.

This first consideration on the side of a strict and determinate necessity, even in the world of mind as in that of matter, might be suggested by a mere view of nature to the philosophical observer of its sequences and its laws; but our second consideration is founded on the view of nature's God. It seems hard to deny Him, either a prescience over all the futurities, or a sovereignty over all the

events of that universe which Himself did create; or that, sitting as we conceive Him to do on a throne of omnipotence, there should be so much as one department of His vast empire, where His power does not fix all, and His intelligence does not foresee all. It greatly enhances this argument, when the department in question happens to be far the highest and noblest in creation; and it does seem to place our doctrine on very secure vantage-ground—that the denial of it would appear to involve the degradation of heaven's high monarch from entire and unexcepted supremacy, not over the material world, but certainly over the spiritual world. The apostle contends for as great a mastery on the part of God over the spirits which He has formed, as the potter has over the clay which he fashions as it pleases him; but the adversaries of an overruling necessity in mind as well as in matter, would limit God as well as man to a mere dominion of clay—or, in other words, while they admit that it is the strength of His almighty arm which gives impulse to all the particles, and both their place and their movement to the most unwieldy masses of mute and passive and unconscious materialism, they would strip Him of the like ascendancy over the moral world; they would people the whole of His living creation with a host of wayward and independent forces, in the agency of which the world of intelligence and of life took its own random direction, and drifted away from the control of Him who formed and who upholds it. For, really, should any thing happen not because the Creator hath so appointed it, but because of

some power and liberty in the creature, that thing is beyond the scope of the sovereignty of God—it hath made its appearance in this universe by Him unbidden and unwilled—the history of men is abandoned to a wild misrule, through the caprice and confusion of which not even Omniscience itself can descry beforehand any character of certainty; and, in as far as the history of men is at all mingled with or has influence on the history of things, there is a vast progression of events over which God has no hold, and that wilders in loose and lawless contingency away from Him. We vainly try to reconcile with this imagination, either the foreknowledge or the supremacy of God—impossible as it is that the eye even of His prophecy can look any way through the descending steps of a series liable at every turn to the intervention of what is purely self-originated and spontaneous, or that the hand of His power can have the entire guidance and government thereof. This consideration obtains great additional force on seeing, as we do experimentally every day, how closely interwoven causes the most minute are with consequences the most momentous, in the history of human affairs. It is quite familiar to us, that the word or thought or feeling of a moment might germinate a big and a busy story—that on what appeared the accidental meeting of two individuals in a street, such events and arrangements might turn as shall give a wholly new direction to the futurity of both—that in this way, on the very humblest of incidents the very greatest passages of history have been suspended; and could all the movements of a nation's policy be

traced to their mysterious springs in the character or circumstances of the actors concerned in them, that, what in itself looked an unimportant casualty, drew the fortune of many nations, and the successive evolution of many centuries in its train. In a world, so linked and constituted as ours is, if the destination of God do not reach to its things of greatest minuteness, then are its things of greatest magnitude beyond the reach of His ascendancy. If He ordain not the fall and the flight of every sparrow, then it is not He who ordains the rise and fall of empires. If He reign not supreme in every little chamber where the passions and the purposes of men are formed, then is He divested of all power and of all presidency in the larger transactions of our world. If He have not the command over every latent spring in the mechanism of human society, then must that mechanism drift uncontrollably away from Him. And thus, it is argued, that, if all things do not fall out with fixed and determinate certainty upon earth, He who has been styled its governor occupies in heaven but the semblance of a throne. His are the mock ensigns of authority; and if man be not a necessary agent, God is a degraded Sovereign.

Our third consideration is, that, let this necessity be as rigid and adamantine as it may, it leaves all the motives and all the influences of human activity precisely where it found them. Although God is the primary, the overruling cause of every one event, whether in the world of mind or of matter, this does not supersede the proximate and the instrumental causes which come immediately before

it. Although He worketh all in all, yet if it be by means that He worketh, the application of these means is still indispensable. It is so for the consummation of a good harvest, which never comes round without labour on our earth below, and the genial influences of shower and of sunshine from the heaven above. And it is equally so for the attainment of any good in human life—in pressing forward to which, man never thinks of acting upon that extended contemplation, which reaches from the first decree of God in eternity, to the final destination in which that decree has its accomplishment. He comes in as it were at an intermediate part of the series; and enters at once into close and busy engagement with those terms of it, which succeed to each other at the place that he occupies. In labouring for example after an earthly fortune, he never thinks of mounting upwards to the purpose of the divine mind regarding it; and scarcely ever of reaching his anticipations forward, either to the sum which shall be realised at death, or which after the accumulation and perhaps the reverses of future years, shall fall into the hands of his children's children. There is a darkness which hangs over the distant past, which he makes no attempt to penetrate. There is a darkness which hangs over the distant future, that he as little attempts to penetrate. Instead of acting the part of a speculatist with the things which lie remotely away from him, he acts with all intensity and practical earnestness on the things which are at hand. They are the likelihoods of the present adventure—they are the means which he possesses; and the arrange-

ments which are held out to him, for his next speculation—they are the openings of trade and of correspondence which lie immediately before him —they are the calculations which he makes upon existing appearances, of the returns that might arise from his existing operations—These are what set his utmost desire and his utmost diligence agoing, and just under the excitement of a hope after the proceeds which he longs and which he labours to realise. His ambition, his keen and unsated appetite, his legitimate aim for the provision and then his interminable aspirations after the splendour of a rising family, the ardent spirit of rivalry with competitors on the same gainful walk of merchandise with himself, and the powerful charm which the fortune and the magnificence that lie in golden perspective before him have over his sanguine imagination—these may be the instruments in the hand of God for ensuring some precise destination that may have been in the view of the divine mind from the infinity that is behind us; and yet with man who never once looks backward to that infinity, these may be the very stimuli which operate on his heart, and make him the busy earnest and aspiring creature that he is. And just, my brethren, as with the business of working for your interest in time, so it is with the business of working for your interest in eternity. I have no wish to theorise you into the doctrine of predestination; but rather to convince you of predestination, article though it be of my own and our church's creed, that it has no more to do with the present and the practical business of your Christianity, than it has

to do with the present and the practical business of your counting-houses. It is in the religious as it is in the trading world. You fetch not your inducements from the hidden things that lie shrouded to mortal eye in the eternity which is past, neither do you fetch them from the things that be alike hidden to us in the yet untravelled depths of the eternity which is to come; but you walk in the light which is immediately around you. With the decree that is written in the book of heaven, with its corresponding fulfilment to be manifested on the closing day of this world's history, these are the secret things which belong unto God, and these you have positively nothing to do with. But there are revealed things which belong unto yourselves and unto your children, and with these you have to do. Repent or you shall perish—with that you have to do. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved—with that also you have to do. Cease to do evil and learn to do well—these are matters in hand and with these you have to do. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near—this carries in it the urgency of a very pressing and present application, and with this you have to do. God has His designs, and He employs the very passions and the very interests which we are now addressing for the accomplishment of them. Yet man's part is not to speculate on these designs, but to be moved by this passion, even the fear of the coming wrath; and to proceed upon this high interest, even the good of his coming immortality. We are now standing together at one link of that extended chain which

reaches from God's first decree to your final destination; and the fastening of that link is by Him who alone gives earnestness to the voice of the preacher, who alone gives susceptibility to the heart of the hearers—Yet the one is at his post when, ignorant as he is both of decrees and of destinies, he, arrested by the worth of your imperishable souls, beckons you to that plain and palpable way whereon they shall be saved; and you are at yours, when, alike ignorant of matters that are indeed too high for us, you catch the impression of a kindred feeling from his lips, and simply and practically betake yourselves to that way. It is thus that the high predestinations of Heaven affect not the proceedings or the business of practical Christianity upon earth; and that while God, on the one hand, preordains all the children of His election unto life—man, on the other, presses forward unto life by putting to the utmost strenuousness of their laborious and busy play all the activities of his nature.

Our next consideration, and the last we can propound with any degree of confidence—feeling, as we do, that we are now approaching that limit which separates the known from the unknown—is, that, as the doctrine of necessity thus understood seems to affect not our most familiar motives to human activity; so neither does it seem to affect the familiar estimate which we are in the habit of forming every day, with regard to the moral character whether it be a character of vice or of virtue in human actions. There is a species of force that does exonerate and excuse a man from all moral responsibility—the force of external violence, and

by which he is compelled against his will to do that which in the matter of it is wrong; as to inflict, for example, some dire and dreadful perpetration with his hand, which in his heart, and with all the feelings and principles of his spontaneous nature, he utterly recoils from. The case is altogether different, when, instead of the deed being against the will, the will goes along with the deed; and when, instead of being driven thereto by a strength that is without him which he finds to be resistless, he is prompted thereto by the strength of an inclination within him which also turns out to be resistless. The first necessity does away all the moral characteristics; but the second necessity, it will be found, so far from doing away, serves to fix and to enhance them the more. The man into whose hand you have forced the instrument of death, and compelled against all his strong and struggling antipathies to plunge it unto the bosom of a friend, you would never regard as the object of any condemnation. The man, on the other, who has done the same act, but done it wilfully, either to execute his revenge or to satiate his thirst for blood, you never fail to execrate as a monster; and if told of one who had doubly a greater strength within him of murderous disposition than another, so that you incurred twice a greater danger by meeting him in a lone place, you would hold him to be doubly the more fiendish and execrable of the two. And it is the same with all the other vicious propensities. The stronger they are, the more hateful, nay the more criminal and worthy both of reprehension and of punishment do you regard the owner of them. If

of two men you felt it necessary to be greatly more on your guard in an act of negotiation against the one than the other, because the first if you be not on your utmost vigilance will be greatly more sure to deceive and to defraud you than the second—this greater sureness, arising of course from the greater strength of his sordid and selfish appetencies, will, instead of palliating, just fasten the taint of a greater delinquency on his character. And this is true of the good as well as of the evil propensities of our nature. The God, for example, who cannot lie—whose very omnipotence is thus limited by the force of a moral necessity—who could certainly lie if He would; but with whom, from the very revoltings of His holy and righteous nature against all that is evil, it is impossible that He would—We say of this necessity, that it enhances the worth of His character, and enthrones Him in the higher reverence of all His worshippers. And it is just so with any of our fellows, who, if so constituted as to lay upon him a moral necessity to be righteous which he felt to be invincible—would just be all the more good and estimable in our eyes. Let such be his inward mechanism, that he could not find it in his heart to do an act of cruelty or unkindness to any thing that breathes; or such the strength of his antipathies to all that is perfidious or base, that he would rather die than be dishonourable; or such his unswerving fidelity to every utterance which falls from him, that you may count with as great certainty on the fulfilment of all his promises as you would on any predicted eclipse in the firmament of heaven; or, in a word, let such

be his unfaltering adherence to rectitude in the midst of strongest temptations, that you might reckon on his constancy to truth and to virtue with as firm an assurance as you would on the constancy of Nature—why, my brethren, all these are so many necessities, and yet they are necessities, which, so far from annihilating the moral characteristics of him who is their subject, only serve to enhance and to illustrate them the more. And they do prove, that while there is a necessity, which, acting on the muscles of the outer man, would sweep away the distinction between good and evil—there is another necessity, which, acting on the motives of the inner man, would but shed a brighter moral exaltation over the one, and put a stigma on the other of a deeper moral debasement: And, so far from nullifying the difference between them, would aggravate the characteristics of both.

LECTURE LXXIII.

ROMANS, ix, 11, 13—24.

"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

Within the circle of the preceding remarks there lies enough for the guidance of man's conduct in time, though not enough for scanning the counsels of God in eternity. The high doctrine of predestination leaves all the scope which they ever had, to the active and moral principles of our nature; and just as notwithstanding that great planetary

movement of our world, in the tremendous velocity of which man it might be fancied would be hurried off its platform, yet can he walk his earthly rounds with as great security as if all were at rest—so, amid the lofty and comprehensive movements of the great spiritual economy, man has a definite and prescribed path, in which it is simply his business to move forward; and, let the past decrees or the coming destinies which begin and which end the mighty cycle of Heaven's administration be what they may, it is our part if we but knew the place which belongs to us—it is our part to work, and to watch, and to strive, and to pray, and to go through the whole work and warfare of practical Christianity, just as before.

This should be enough for one who is simply bent on the attainment of his salvation, though not enough to satisfy the proud the restless spirit of soaring adventurous and speculative man—who, not content with knowing all that belongs unto himself, would lift up the enquiries of his mind to matters that are greatly too high for it; and seize, as if within the lawful domain of his intellect, on all that belongs unto God. It is precisely at this point, we think, that the real difficulties of the question begin; and they are just such difficulties as it is our wisdom, not to brave, but to retire from. This is the very point at which the apostle repels the question which he is either not willing, or more likely not able, even with all his apostolical endowments, to resolve—'Thou wilt say then, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?' You will observe that in these words, there is an

arraignment of God, and a call or a challenge for His vindication. The part which belongs to man, when plied as he is most urgently and most affectionately by the offers of the gospel, is abundantly clear. But in point of fact some do accept these offers, while others turn away from them; and when this difference between the one and the other is traced to the power and predestination of God, this brings the high policy of the Eternal into view, and the reasons of that policy are not so clear. Were the question never stirred as to the part which God has in the matter, there might be nought to embarrass or disturb us—for all is simple and shining as the light of day, about the part which man has in the matter. Could we only prevail on him to bestow all his intensity on the things which properly belong unto himself, and which himself has personally to do with, all would be plain and practical; and the great work of salvation would go on most prosperously. But we will be meddling with the things which belong unto God; and thus it is that a theology floundering beyond her depths, and compassed about with difficulties through which she cannot make her way, gives forth her hard sentences and her cabalistic sayings—when she might be otherwise and far better employed, in lifting the direct and the urgent and withal the clearly intelligible calls of the gospel. It is when in the act of plying these calls that the minister of the New Testament stands upon his vantage-ground. It is when charged with the overtures of forgiveness to guilty men, he, in the name of a beseeching God, presses the acceptance of them upon every creature

who is within the reach of his voice. It is when, in the discharge of his ample and unexcepted commission to all who are sitting and listening around him, he invites each, and forbids none, to cast their confidence on the great propitiation; and then it is impossible they can perish. It is when on the strength of this precious declaration, that whosoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out, he both sends the invitation abroad among the multitude, and brings it specifically home and with all the power of his tender and most earnest solicitations to the heart of each individual. With him there is no distinction between the elect and the reprobate, for he knocks at every door; and while it is most true, that some do welcome, and others do most obstinately and impregnably withstand him, yet his business is to address a free gospel unto all, and to lift in the hearing of all the assurance—that, for each and for every of our species, there is an open mediatorial gate to that mercy-seat where God waiteth to be gracious. Again it may be asked to explain this wondrous diversity of influence among men, and why it is that some do reject and others do receive these tidings of salvation? Our answer roundly and absolutely is that we do not know. But this we know, that the way to lessen the number of those who shall reject, and to add to the number of those who shall receive, is just to ply these tidings as heretofore in the hearing of all and for the behoof of all. It is most true that God has the power over human hearts, to turn them whithersoever He will; and if demanded why then do not all the hearts of men receive that touch from

the hands of His omnipotence which might turn them unto the way of life, our reply is still that we cannot say. But this we are empowered to say, that there is not a hard-hearted sinner amongst you, who is not within the scope of the invitation, Come ye also and be saved; and to your prayers for the clean heart and the right spirit, a softening and a sanctifying influence will be made to descend upon you. For aught we know our world might have never fallen, or after having fallen, a voice may have gone forth again from Heaven, armed with a force and an efficacy of grace, to recall every individual of its strayed and alienated family; and if again the question be reiterated, why is it not so with the world we occupy, again it is our answer that we cannot tell: But this we can truly tell, that not an individual is here present, who has not the word and the warrant from Heaven's high throne, to believe in Christ that he might be saved. That thing may be conceived, whereof we have the woful evidence that it has not been realised—even a sinless universe, whose every sun lighted up the habitations of unspotted holiness, and whose every planet was proof against the inroads of every ruthless destroyer; and if called upon to vindicate either the entry or the continuance of moral evil, we sink under the burden of the deep and the hopeless mystery, and feel it to be impracticable; but of this we can assure you, even a plain and a practicable way of escape for ourselves, both from the tyranny of evil and from the terrors of that vengeance which is due to it. And O if we but stopped at the place, where apostles stood silent

and solemnized and did reverently stop before us—if, forbearing a scrutiny into the counsels of Heaven, we simply betook ourselves to that bidden walk upon earth, which will at length conduct us both to the light and love of its unclouded habitations—if, waiting and working at our allotted task here below, we would but suspend that judgment, which we can neither pluck from the recesses of the eternity that is past, nor from the yet unexplored distances of the eternity before us—in a word, if, instead of speculating we were humble enough to submit, and, instead of dogmatising were teachable enough and obedient enough to do—This were the way for arriving at the resolution of all difficulties; and we should at length, when the mystery of God was finished, emerge into that region of purest transparency where we shall know even as we are known.

Peter says of Paul in one of his epistles, "and account that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation,—even as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

We doubt not that in the reference which the one apostle makes to the writings of the other, he in the first instance had in his eye that passage in the second chapter of the Romans, where Paul says, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing

that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." But we have as little doubt, that he, in the second instance, had in his eye some of those very things which now engage our attention in this ninth chapter of the Romans; and more especially that passage which forms a most remarkable counterpart to the one last quoted, and where the long-suffering, instead of being related as it is by Peter to the salvation of sinners, seems as if related by Paul to their destruction—"What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles?"

We shall go over a few of the verses of this chapter, and lay aside that in them which is hard to be understood from that which is otherwise. It will be uniformly found that all that is difficult, attaches to those prior steps which belong to the part wherewith God had to do, before that man's part fell to be performed—leaving as clear and as comprehensible as before, both the part which man has to do, and also those posterior steps of the divine administration which follow on the part which we shall have taken in the world. Or, in other words, if there be not enough of revelation to ap-

pease the restless curiosity of man that would pry into the concerns of God, there is enough to enlighten his conscience and to guide his hopes in every thing which relates to his own proper and personal concerns.

In the eleventh verse then, we cannot refuse the statement that God had before the birth of Jacob and Esau an anterior purpose respecting their destinations; and that the actual and historical difference which afterwards took place between the two, was the effect of that purpose. Of this election on the part of God I can give no account—I submit to be informed of the fact; but I am utterly in the dark as to the reason of it. I have to remark, however, that, although this purpose according to election is not of works but of Him that calleth—although the purpose of the divine mind was the primary, the originating cause of the favour shown to Israel, yet it followeth not, that works on the part of those whom He does favour are not indispensable. You would say of a stream of water that issued first from a fountain-head, and then was collected into a reservoir or second fountain whence it flowed anew, you would say that though it came through the lower fountain, it came from or of the higher. And so of this high predestination on the part of God. All that regards either our history in time, or our final condition in eternity, might originate there; and yet it may be true, that we cannot pass onward to glory in heaven, without passing through a course of personal righteousness upon earth. The primary will of God may be the aboriginal fountain of all the bless-

ings which the children of life are to enjoy; and yet there may be a secondary fountain derived therefrom—even a fountain of grace struck out in the heart of man, and whence all the virtues of moral worth and of spiritual excellence overflow upon his history. It is thus that we can harmonise the doctrine of an absolute preordination on the part of God, with the indispensable necessity of a conditional obedience on the part of man—So that while we admit the one as true on the strength of the passage now before us, we can, in perfect consistency therewith, admit to be true, and on the strength of other passages, that without holiness no man can see God—that all shall receive according to their works—that those who are predestinated unto life eternal are predestinated to be conformed beforehand unto the image of Christ, so that they shall not be ushered into the place of His exaltation, without being first adorned by the virtues of His example—and lastly, which describes the successive steps of this process, that "by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." So that though God's primary decree is not of works, it is at least to works—insomuch that even among the children of the predestined Israel, the rewards and the preferments of eternity follow in the train of good works; and among the children of reprobate Esau, the disgrace and the wretchedness of their irretrievable condemnation follow in the train

of their evil works. In the thirteenth verse we have a quotation from Malachi, where the love and the hatred might not be the feelings on the part of the Godhead which prompted Him to His respective acts of election, but the feelings wherewith He regarded the respective characters of the good and the evil—not the prior affection which caused the difference; but the posterior affection of a Being of whom we distinctly know that He loveth righteousness, and as distinctly know that He hateth iniquity.

The posterior affection is all that we have to go by, for indicating the moral character of God. The prior one is hidden in a depth that is behind us, and is to us unfathomable. On this point we can say no more than the apostle has done before us. He can but assert, for he makes no attempt to argue, that God may without injustice thus affix His distinctions beforehand, on the creatures whom He calls into existence. He gives us only assertion for this in the fourteenth verse, and no more than the bare assumption of a sovereignty for God in the fifteenth verse. It is true that in the sixteenth verse, he makes a statement which admits of being qualified in the very same way with the previous statement that the purpose of God according to election is not of works. In like manner as the predestination on the part of God should be antedated before the performances or the works of righteousness on the part of man, and yet these works are indispensable—so the predestinating mercy of God should be antedated before the willing and the running of man, and yet this willing and this running are indispensable. The way in which this

prior will of God goes forth and takes effect upon us, is to set us a-willing. The way in which this prior work of grace by God goeth forth and taketh effect upon us, is to set us a-working. He works in us, not to supersede, but to stimulate our working for ourselves. He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. And He does so, by the efficacy which He gives to those familiar and every-day instruments, which are within the reach of man. He does so by the moral urgency of bibles, and pulpits, and zealous messengers of salvation, and Christian parents labouring for the immortality of their children, and bringing the truths and the lessons of revelation to bear upon their consciences—so that, while behind the curtain of our visible world there is a predestinating God, the movements of whose finger we can neither trace nor account for, yet before that curtain there is a scene of movements, which correspond to those that be veiled from observation on the other side, and which being on this side are palpably before our eyes; and what we behold of all those destined heirs of immortality is, that they are striving to enter through the gate which leads to it—and working out their own salvation—and so willing and running as that they may obtain—and putting forth all the activities of their nature, in quest of a blissful eternity—and carrying their point, only by urging onward with an intensity of effort which our Saviour Himself has characterised by the epithet of violence—Insomuch that He hath told us, how, under that economy which He has instituted, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

I cannot bid you too often, my brethren, distinguish between the anterior part of this process which belonged to God, and the present or the posterior parts which belong to man—between those secret footsteps of the Almighty which preceded the ushering of His creatures into the theatre of their actual existence, and the parts which now that they have been introduced upon the theatre they are called upon to perform. The darkness of thickest midnight may rest upon the one quarter of contemplation, while the other is lighted up by the blaze of noon-day effulgence. The question of what man ought to do, may be met by the promptest and the plainest deliverance. The question of what God has done amid the counsels and the measures of His past eternity, or what He is now doing behind that impenetrable mantle which lies on the hidden part of His ways—this question may be one of deepest and most hopeless obscurity. I may know the present counsel which should be given to my fellows. I know not the past counsels of the profound, the predestinating Deity.

This is a reflection that falls with overwhelming force on the perusal of the two following verses, and with mightiest emphasis of all when we come to the last clause of them. To the demand for a vindication of God's proceeding in this matter, I can only reply with the apostle in the three following verses; but, while professing all the impotence of a child when viewing God's part of the question, I cannot look to man's part of it without such distinct and decisive feelings, as I am sure will be sympathised with by all who hear me. It was the

part which a haughty tyrant had taken against the liberties of a captive and subjugated people, whose piteous moanings had now reached unto heaven, and the blood of whose slaughtered little ones cried aloud for vengeance. But ere the stroke of vengeance should fall, the voice of warning was sent unto him; and repeated miracles were wrought before his eyes; and demonstrations were given of a power that was long brandished over his head, before it came down upon him with the fell swoop of a final and irreversible destruction; and, at each of the ten successive plagues, there were space and opportunity given for repentance; and if he would but have been righteous and redressed the wrongs of a sorely outraged and oppressed nation, neither would the angel of death have put forth his hand upon the families of Egypt, nor Pharaoh and his mighty hosts have been overwhelmed in the Red Sea. But after every new chastisement, did he gather into a stiffer and a prouder attitude than before; and alike cast the judgments of Israel's God and the remonstrances of Israel's patriarchs away from him; and, in despite of that sore and bitter cry which reached to his inner chamber from all the weeping families of a people to whom his own had owed their preservation, did he send forth from his despot throne the mandates of a still more reckless and relentless cruelty—aggravating a bondage that was already intolerable, and trampling more fiercely and scornfully than ever on the trembling victims of his wrath. We again say, that we positively are not able to pronounce on the movements of that secret but supreme power, in

whose hands the whole power of Egypt's monarchy was but an instrument for the accomplishment of higher purposes; but, looking to him who filled that monarchy, we instantly and decisively pronounce upon the doom that rightfully belonged to him—nor, while the heart of man remaineth as it is, can he keep it from revolting against this false and unfeeling oppressor, or from rejoicing in the destiny which hurled him from his throne. And should, in this world's latter day, the scene be acted over again, between the struggles of a patriot nation and the stern resolves of a lordly and barbaric despotism—neither what is told and authoritatively told of the mysteries of a predestinating God, nor what is reasoned and irrefragably reasoned of the metaphysics of an unveering necessity, shall ever overbear the judgment or the sensibilities of our moral nature; but, in spite of ourselves, should the spectacle again be offered of a triumphant people and a tyrant overthrown—still, as heretofore, should we feel it to be a retribution of Heaven's high justice upon the one; and still unite with the other in their lofty acclaims of gratitude, loud as from the hosts of Israel when the horses and the chariots of Pharaoh were cast into the sea, and joyful as the song of Moses over his now liberated nation.

LECTURE LXXIV.

ROMANS, ix, 19—24.

"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

But before entering upon the affirmation of Peter, we again recommend your attentive comparison of the two passages in Paul—in the one of which the part which God has in the processes, either of man's ruin or of his recovery, is adverted to by the apostle; and in the other of which the part is adverted to that man himself has in these processes. The first passage is in Romans, ix, 22–24: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" The second in Romans, ii, 4–11: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suf-

fering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath: tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God." You will observe that what the inspired writer says of God's anterior processes regarding the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy, is in the form of a query and not of an express deliverance. This is not a subject on which he lays himself out for the satisfaction of his readers, and so it remains an unrevealed mystery. But what is of chief because of practical importance to us is, that they, of whom it is said in the 9th chapter, that the long-suffering of God will terminate in their destruction, are only those who in the language of the 2nd chapter shall be found to have despised that long-suffering—that they who are called vessels of wrath and whom God is said to have hardened in the obscure passage, are they who in the clear passage are said after their own hardness and impenitent heart to treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of

the righteous judgment of God—that while in the one God is represented as preparing aforehand unto glory yet in the other He is represented as rendering to every man according to his deeds—that while in the one He is set before us as calling Jews or Gentiles of His own past ordination, yet, this must be in harmony with that which is our present concern, even that God giveth eternal life to those who have observed a patient continuance in well-doing; and tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil, whether Jew or Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God. And thus again while a hopeless and as yet impracticable obscurity sits on God's part, there is none whatever which sitteth upon ours. We do not know why He may have selected us as the individuals in whom He worketh to will and to do; but we do know what is incumbent on us, which is to work out our own salvation. We do not know why any individuals ever come into contact with the first influences of that hardened process which shall terminate in their destruction; but we know it to be the pressing, and we shall add the practicable duty of all individuals, to harden not their own hearts—and that if any individual here present shall but awaken unto a concern for his own soul, and betake himself in good earnest to his perusals of the Bible and to his prayers, God is in readiness to descend with an influence that shall soften and shall save him, saying unto one and all "Turn unto me and I will pour out my Spirit upon you."

This brings me to the utterance of Peter "that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation"—not

willing, as he says some verses before, that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. We are aware of the distinction made by theologians between the secret and the revealed will of God; and the only use we should like to make of it is this, that whatever is secret belongs unto Him and we have nothing to do with it—whatever is revealed belongs unto us and with that we have to do. What God's past ordinations are in regard to us we do not know. Paul singles out no individuals. He treats the doctrine generally, and even then bids adieu to it with a question which he leaves unsolved; and so let us leave it. What God's present attitude is in regard to us we do know; for Peter, instead of guessing at it by a question, tells us of it by an affirmation the most distinct and decisive—and not only so, but bids us beware of suffering ought that has been said by Paul to defeat or to do away the expression of it. Our wisdom is to forbear the question, and to proceed upon the affirmation; to imitate the one apostle in his speculative reserve, and to take from the other apostle the impress of his practical earnestness—assured, that, however impenetrable the haze may be which hangs over the path-way of God from His first decrees to the present moment of our history, there is now a clear path-way for man; and on which God Himself invites one and all of you to enter. He has suffered you so long, that He might still ply you with the offers of a free salvation. He did not cut you down yesterday, that this day you might be met by at least one call more; and have another opportunity of making

good your reconciliation; and be again told of the open door of Christ's mediatorship—and that deep as is the crimson dye of your manifold iniquities, and provoking as the indifference has been of your past feelings to that gospel which has so oft been sounded in your hearing and sounded in vain Yet this one day more if you will but hear His voice, are we impowered to say to each and to every that God is still willing and still waiting to be gracious.

And there is one way in which you might turn to plain and practical account the doctrine of God's agency. You may propitiate it by your obedience. You may obtain it by your prayers. Instead of probing into the mystery of God hardening the heart of Pharaoh, know that there is one way in which you may realise a hardening process upon your own heart—even by your resistance of our present call. That will harden you the more against the impression of every future call. Or, instead of waiting for a special and a sanctifying operation upon your own soul, know that there is a way by which you may work for it. Give all your present strength to the doing of God's will, and ask for more. Think not that the way of your salvation is one of hidden and impracticable mystery. It is indeed a plain and a practicable way, and the way that we now want to reduce you to. Never was there a more distinct and open path laid down by any sovereign for the return of his offending subjects, than the sovereign of heaven and earth has laid down for us His apostate creatures. He offers you forgiveness through the blood of Christ. He

promises you strength and sanctification through the influences of His own free Spirit. He tells you what the new obedience of the gospel is. And He bids you enter on that obedience, trusting in the Lord and doing good continually. To incite your earnestness, He addresses Himself to the various feelings and principles of your nature—at one time moving your fears by His report of the coming vengeance, and at another your desires and your hopes by His representation of heaven and its unfading glories. And, to crown all, He stretches out even now to the guiltiest of you all the hand of a purchased and a proffered reconciliation—declaring that if you will only come over from sin unto the Saviour, He will be forthwith a Father unto you, your guide in time, your guarantee for an inheritance in eternity. Surely the God who is doing all this is wiping His hands of you. "Your blood will be upon your own heads; and He, clear when He speaketh and justified when He judgeth, when He says what more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done for it, will leave you without a speech and without an argument.

This doctrine of predestination ought never to be a stumbling-block in the way of your entertaining the overtures of the gospel. Leave it to God Himself to harmonise those everlasting decrees, by which He hath distinguished between the elect and the reprobate, with His present declarations of goodwill to one and to all of the human family. Your business is to let the decrees alone, and to cast your joyful confidence upon the declarations. Should an earthly monarch send a message of friendship

to your door, must you reject it either as unintelligible or unreal, because you have not been instructed in all the mysteries of his government? Because you cannot comprehend the policy of his empire, must you therefore not receive the offered kindness which had come from him to your own dwelling-place? And ere you can appreciate the gift which he holds out for your single and specific acceptance, must you first be able to trace all the workings and all the ways of the vast the varied superintendence which belongs to him? It is truly so with God, who, although presiding over a management which embraces all worlds and reaches from everlasting to everlasting, has nevertheless sent to each individual amongst us, the special intimation of His perfect willingness to admit us into favour; and must we, I ask, suspend our comfort and our confidence therein, till we, the occupiers of one of the humblest tenements in creation and only the creatures but of yesterday, till we shall have mastered the economy of this wondrous universe and scanned the counsels of eternity?

Although I have expatiated at such length upon this subject, it was not for the purpose of schooling you into the doctrine of predestination—for, while we deem it to be true in itself, we deem it not to be a truth the belief of which is essential to salvation. It was not even in the hope that our argument in its favour should be understood by all; nor do we hold such an understanding to be at all indispensable. Far less was it in the presumptuous imagination, that I could vindicate all the ways of God to man—for small indeed is that part of His

ways to which we have access. But it was solely with the view to urge upon you, that, whatever obscurity was cast by this high doctrine on the ways of God to man, the ways of man to God were not altered, and should not at all be obscured by it—but rather that the hopes and the obligations and the whole business of your practical Christianity, are left by it on the same familiar footing as before; and that with the view of averting a great mischief incurred by those unstable and unlearned who wrest this scripture, even as they do the others, to their own destruction. You may not even understand how it is that God's predestination affects not your practice, but be assured that so it is; and grievous indeed will be your condemnation, if one principle about which you are confessedly in the dark, shall be found to have bewildered you away from the light of those other principles which are clear and conspicuous, and by proceeding with honesty and in good earnest upon which it is that you are saved. We can truly own that we entered upon this subject with reluctance, and only because it stood in our way. We now leave it without regret, unwilling to say more and yet feeling that we could scarcely have said less—though, after all, there is perhaps a remaining obscurity essentially inherent in the subject, and which no explanation can do away.

But let me hope that a time is coming, when many here present shall fondly and with felt advantage recur to it—even when, after having laboured with all diligence, and being compassed about with all the virtues of heaven, they shall attain the as-

surance therefrom that heaven is their destined habitation. Then indeed may the doctrine be contemplated both with safety and with profit by aged and advanced Christians, when they reflect on all that way by which they have been led, and recognise in it the grace and providence of a God who has so evidently spiritualised them—when they shall adopt the language of the apostle that it is by the grace of God I am what I am; and when, to the comfort and the gratitude which such a reflection is fitted to inspire, they shall add the humility of this other sentiment, It is God alone who hath made us to differ, and we have nothing that we did not receive.

Ver. 24. 'Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.'

I recur to this verse for the purpose of noticing a distinction of sentiment between two classes of theologians on that subject which has recently engrossed us—the first of whom would extend the doctrine of predestination to individuals, and make the final and everlasting condition of each single man the subject of an absolute and rigorous decree from all eternity; and the second of whom, revolted by what they feel to be the utter harshness of such a representation, would at the same time yield so far to the authority of Scripture, as to advocate a certain application of this doctrine to whole nations or collective bodies of men. That is—they will allow, not of certain individuals being predestined to life eternal in heaven to the exclusion of all others; but they will allow of certain nations being predestined to the light of Christianity upon earth, while

others are left in the darkness of superstition or of paganism. They cannot refuse, for example, that the call of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews were both of them matters of prophecy and of predestination in the counsels of heaven. But this they contend for as the whole length to which the doctrine of God's fixed and irreversible decrees ought to be carried—arguing, in fact, that the only purpose of the apostle was to vindicate the great national movement which the true religion made in his day away from his people, and onward to the other countries and people of the world. They hold the doctrine to be tolerable thus far, and chiefly because it does not infringe on the warrant of each individual man to embrace the gospel in those places where the gospel is proclaimed; and appears to leave untouched all the practical influences, by which men are led to choose, and to resolve, and to endeavour, and to strive, and to put forth all the activities of their nature in the business both of willing and of working out their own salvation.

We have already laboured to assure you, that the most staunch and sturdy advocates of a predestination which reaches even to individuals, would contend as earnestly as others for the unexcepted range of the gospel call, and for the freest and widest scope to all the activities of gospel obedience. And we further concede the great object of the apostle throughout the whole argumentation of this chapter, to have been just to establish a national predestination; and that with the purpose of justifying the transference which was about to be made of the

true religion from Jews to Gentiles. Nevertheless, he, in the course of his argument, unfolds to us the power or the predestination of God as extending to individuals also—to the good destinies of Isaac and Jacob on the one hand—to the evil destines of Ishmael and Esau and Pharaoh upon the other. The truth is, it is by an influence upon the hearts and the histories of individuals, that He gives a direction to the fortune and to the history of nations; and again, on the state of a nation may turn both the present character and the future nay eternal condition of each individual belonging to it. They who admit of a predestination in regard to the larger historical movements of this world's kingdoms, cannot escape from the necessity of this predestination having an influence upon individuals and upon families. More especially upon the light of the gospel having been predestined for any nation, may there depend the eternal life of every separate man in that nation who shall have embraced the gospel. But we now bid our final adieu to the general argument; and we should like to do it in the very spirit wherewith our Saviour met the speculative question of that enquirer, who asked Him if there were many that should be saved. He was bidden to recall his attention from this wide and general survey, and simply look to himself and labour for his own salvation. The reply was strive to enter in at the strait gate—for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. And so, my brethren, would I have you to turn yourselves from the general survey of God's arrangements, to a personal search and application of your own case and interest therein. He has at least introduced the

light of the gospel to that country in which you dwell. He has at least visited you with Christian Sabbaths and Christian opportunities. The effect of His having so selected and signalised our nation is, that He has selected and signalised each individual amongst you by a pointed a personal offer of reconciliation. This is the matter that concerns you; and, could we only prevail upon you duly to entertain this matter, we should hold it a far higher achievement, than to furnish you with all the arguments, and exhibit even to your full conviction all the parts and proportions of our systematic theology. We tell you of God's beseeching voice. We assure you, in His name, that He wants you not to die. We bid you venture for pardon on the atonement made by Him who died for all men. We bid you apply forthwith to the Spirit of all grace and holiness, that you may be qualified to enter into that beatific heaven, from whose battlements there wave the signals of welcome, and whose gates are wide open to receive you. We would bring this plain word of salvation nigh unto every conscience, and knock with it at the door of every heart; and, commissioned as we are to preach the gospel not to a chosen few while we keep it back from the hosts of the reprobate, but to preach it to every creature under heaven, we again entreat that none here present shall forbid themselves — for most assuredly God hath not forbidden them. But come unto Christ all of you who labour and are heavy-laden, and ye shall have rest. Look unto Him all ye ends of the earth; and, though now placed at the farthest outskirts of a moral distance and alienation, even look unto Him and ye shall be saved.

LECTURE LXXV.

ROMANS, ix, 25—33.

"As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God. Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

VER. 25. 'As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people which were not my people; and her beloved which was not beloved.'

The apostle, with his usual skill and dexterity of argument, addressed himself as a Jew to the Jews; and so brings their own scriptures to bear upon them. He first quotes a prophecy from Hosea regarding the Gentiles; and of whom it is most distinctly stated that they were to be admitted to the same favour, by which the children of Israel had been specialised, and from which themselves had heretofore been outcasts. He thus takes shel-

ter under the old and venerable authorities, which the very people against whom he contended held in equal reverence with himself, and proves that it is no new idea—this extension of the family of God, in such a way that other nations might enter into the same close relationship with Him of His people, which had hitherto been confined to the descendants of Israel.

Ver. 26. 'And it shall come to pass, that in the place where is was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God.'

This verse seems necessary for describing the precise manner in which the extension was to take place. It had been no unwonted thing for Gentiles to become proselytes; but still the land they occupied was regarded as an outcast region of heathenism, and they looked to Judea as the Holy Land —to Jerusalem as the priestly and the consecrated place whereunto they looked as the great metropolis of religion, and whither many of them repaired every year to join in the solemn services of the temple. It was not in this sense however that the coming enlargement was to be brought about. In the language of our Saviour to the woman of Samaria, the hour was at hand when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem the Father was to be worshipped. Even the local affinity, between the true religion and the country or the cities of the people of Israel, was forthwith to be dissolved; and in every nation he that feared God and worked righteousness was to be accepted of Him. Still Proselytes from every nation under heaven came to

Jerusalem at the time of their great festival; but now, without any such annual migration, a priesthood and a religious service and an acceptable worship were to be established in the very seats of idolatry. *In the place* where it was said unto them Ye are not my people, *there* shall they be called the children of the living God.

Ver. 27. 'Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.'

The prophecy of Hosea respected the Gentiles; and is quoted for the purpose of reconciling the children of Israel to their participation, in what had been hitherto the distinguishing privileges of but one people. The prophecy of Isaiah respects Israel itself; and is quoted for the purpose of showing, and from the mouth of their greatest Prophet, that, although God had uttered promises in behalf of a seed numerous as the sand of the sea-shore, yet that He regarded not these promises as broken although they were made good only to a remnant of them. That prophecy referred, in the first instance, to a fell destruction which came on the children of Israel, and reduced them to but a remnant—proving it to be no strange thing in God, to have abandoned to their ruin a vast majority of the children of Abraham, even notwithstanding the word of promise which He had made to the patriarch; and therefore that this promise would be as little falsified now as it was then, although the great bulk of the nation should be reft of the divine favour, and but a small fraction of them should remain in that favour by embracing Christianity. 'Esaias also

crieth concerning them, Though the number, the predicted and promised number to Abraham, of descendants who should spring from him, was that they should be as the sand of the sea, yet but a remnant shall be saved.'

Ver. 28. 'For he will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.'

This alludes to the work of vengeance, that in His righteous indignation was executed upon the children of Israel; and that, by a sudden and overwhelming invasion of their enemies. The same work was speedily to be done over again by the forces of the Roman empire; and, in like manner as the truth of God's promise to Abraham stood unimpeachable and firm because of the remnant that survived the sweeping destruction of these former days—so the impending destruction of the latter days would also leave a remnant which should vindicate the word of God from the charge of having taken none effect.

Ver. 29. 'And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.'

The Lord of Sabaoth signifies the Lord of Hosts. Had He left no remnant, had He made a clean and total destruction of Israel, then it would have shared in the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah—cities of which now no vestige is to be found, and of whose people the descendants are altogether lost in the history of our species. It is not so with the Jews. A goodly number of them were obedient unto the faith, and in them all the blessings pro-

mised to Abraham had their richest accomplishment. Even those who stood obstinately out in their rejection of the Saviour were not all cut off; and their posterity maintain a separate and a monumental character to this very day—at once affording a most impressive evidence of that special part which the Divinity takes in their affairs; and forming a reserve, as it were, for the fulfilment of such a restoration upon them as shall pour a lustre on all the prophecies which have been delivered in their behalf; and make it obvious, that, after the many dark reverses and humiliations which this singular people have undergone, that, after all, there is not a promise which has been uttered to their patriarchs of old which has not obtained a splendid verification in the subsequent history of the race.

Ver. 30. 'What shall we say then?—That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.'

It might well disarm predestination of all its terrors, when we look to the way in which its fulfilments are practically brought about. There is the offer of a justifying righteousness made unto all; and they who accept, as the Gentiles in the present instance, are the objects of a blessed predestination. The reprobate are they who decline that offer. However tremendous it may look when viewed by us from afar, among the sublime and mysterious altitudes of that past eternity where be the primary links of a vast progression reaching from the decrees of the unsearchable God to the yet unrevealed destinies of all His creatures—cer-

tain it is, that God when, instead of being contemplated in His place at the commencement of this chain where He stands at so lofty and incomprehensible a distance away from us, is contemplated in the place He occupies at the present and the contiguous links, appears to us under a very different aspect from that in which our imagination arrays Him, when we cast our regards athwart the boundless interval of those ages which are past. And whether is it better, we ask, to take our impressions of the Divinity in the act of looking to Him as God at a distance—or in the act of listening to Him as a God who is at hand? Whatever He may have purposed or done then, when creation and all its issues were fixed by an act of preordination, that reached forward unto all and embraced all—this is what He is doing now. He is stretching out for your acceptance the title-deeds to an inheritance of glory. He is offering to put into your hands a right of entry into the city which hath foundations. He is making the issues of *your* eternity, at least, to turn upon this—whether, accepting of Christ's righteousness as a gift and so coming into possession of a valid plea for the honours and rewards of heaven, you shall obtain sure entrance thereinto; or, declining this offer and casting the die upon your own righteousness, you shall utterly fail of everlasting bliss. Grant that you are the objects of a blessed predestination, here is the way in which you make it good—even by accepting through faith the righteousness of Christ as your meritorious plea of acceptance with God. Grant that any of you shall turn out to have been

the objects of dire reprobation, this will not be without your refusal of an offer complied with by others, but made also unto you—made without reserve and without exception unto all. Let me entreat you then, once more, to forego the distant, and to take up with the near contemplation. Attend not to God's past decrees, but to God's present dealings with you—not to what He has written *of* you in that book of His secret counsels which is up in heaven, but to what He has written *to* you in that book of His open declarations which is now circulating freely on earth, and on a copy of which each may lay his hand. In the language of the next chapter—try not to pluck the secret of your destiny from heaven above, or from the recesses of that eternity which is behind—try not to fetch it into the light of day from the profundity that is under your feet, or from the yet untravelled depths of that eternity which is before; but take all your direction, and the guidance of every footstep, from the word which is nigh unto you. There you read of God's beseeching voice—of His protestations, nay of His very oaths, that in your death He has no pleasure—of this proclamation the sound whereof reaches from the mercy-seat to the farthest outskirts of His sinful family, even that "whosoever calleth upon the name of his Son shall be saved." And if, on looking across the medium of that endless retrospect where clouds and darkness at last terminate the vision, you could descry nought to cheer you into confidence, learn now to regard the present attitude, and hearken to the present accents of a God—all whose thoughts to those who seek after

Him, are thoughts of graciousness, and who now holds Himself forth unto all as a God benign and placable and tender.

It is said of the Gentiles that they followed not after righteousness and yet obtained it. The righteousness of that law which was written in the books of Moses, they were generally ignorant of. The righteousness of that law which was written in their own hearts, they knew but they did not follow; but there was a righteousness followed after, even till it was finished, by Christ Jesus as the substitute of sinners. This was declared to them as a righteousness in which they might appear with acceptance before God—a declaration believed by many; and according to their belief so was it done unto them.

Ver. 31. 'But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness hath not attained to the law of righteousness.'

The law of righteousness here is the same with the righteousness of the law. They strove by their obedience to its precepts after a right to its rewards. It was not with a view of simply adorning their character by the graces or virtues of the law, nor was it from the impulse of a love for its righteousness, that they so laboured. It was with the view of making good that condition, on which they conceived that the reward was suspended—after which they could challenge that reward as their due; as a thing that they had as much won as either the wages for which they had served, or the goods for which they had paid down the purchase-money. This was that after which they laboured, and this

they fell short of. Their obedience did not come up to the high requisitions of the law, and so they missed of its reward. On the contrary, their disobedience, both in transgressing and in coming short —their sins, both of commission and of omission, brought them under its clear and decisive condemnation. They may have fulfilled in some things, but they failed in many things; and though toiling with all the strenuousness of men whose eternity was at issue, none could overtake the whole length and breadth of its commandments.

Now observe the precise effect of this state of matters. However willing God might be that all these transgressors should be admitted into Heaven —yet this admittance of them might not be possible, so long as they on the other hand were not willing to be admitted there, but on the footing of a remuneration for their obedience. There might be enough of the disposition of kindness on the part of God to bestow heaven upon them as a present; but there might be a disposition on the part of man to decline it in this character, and to demand it as the term of a contract which they challenge the other party to fulfil. This brings the parties to a stand, and it is no light matter which they stand for. It is for a high principle of divine jurisprudence, of which we are taught in the Bible that there is a moral impossibility that it should be violated. Upon the difference between heaven as a thing of free grace to the sinner, or heaven as a thing of due and merited return to him for his obedience as it is, there just turns the difference between a vindicated and a dishonoured law. This

difference, man, obtuse and deadened as he is in all the sensibilities of his moral nature, might feel to be a slight one; but it was not so felt among the pure and ethereal intelligences of the upper sanctuary. The angels who are there saw the dilemma, and looked on with most intense earnestness to the evolutions of that great problem by which it might be extricated. It was a question of pure and lofty jurisprudence; and, however shadowy it might appear to beings of our grosser faculties, and withal darkened and made dull in all our perceptions of what is due to Heaven's high sacredness by the blight which sin has cast upon them—it was truly a question for which all heaven was put in motion; and on which the King who sitteth upon its throne, put forth the resources and the energies of a wisdom that is infinite. And His authoritative declaration to this our rebel world is, that the sanctions of His law could not be nullified—that all creation must pass away rather than that any of its promises or any of its threatenings should fail —that the truth and justice and righteousness of the Lawgiver, admitted of nothing short from the rigid execution of all its penalties—that sinners could not be admitted to His complacency, till their sin had been branded with the mark of an adequate condemnation; and, more particularly, that He would not descend to any compromise with those, who, instead of trembling as they ought lest the fire of an offended jealousy should go forth upon them to burn up and to destroy, persisted for their plea of acceptance in an obedience so paltry and so polluted, as being honourable enough to the Law

and as every way good enough for the exalted Law-giver.

Ver. 32. 'Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.'

This is a most important question, and a most instructive reply to it—more especially when we view it as given by the apostle newly emerged from the subject of predestination, on which he had just been arguing. All fresh as he was my brethren from the high topic of God's decrees, yet, on the moment that he turns himself to consider the reason why Israel fell short of the promised blessing, he lays it on the familiar topic of man's doings. The cause of their not attaining to righteousness, and so of their being excluded from life everlasting, is here resolved, not into the destinies of the Creator, but into the doings of His creatures—not into the predestination that is made by God above, but into the wrong and the wilfully wrong direction that is taken by man below. Instead of speculating on the incomprehensible mystery of that will in heaven by which some are elected unto life, he tells us of the way upon earth which all men should take in order to arrive at it. And the reason simply why the children of Israel missed the object of a blissful eternity, at least the only reason which either they or we have to do with, is that they took the wrong way. They sought a righteousness which might justify them before God by the works of the law; and this proved a stumbling-stone at which they stumbled and fell, and that very far short indeed of the goal to which they were pressing for-

wards. They tried to master the requisitions of the law, in order thereby to get at its reward; and the law proved too hard for them. They chose to enter the lists with the judgment of the law, and that judgment therefore must take effect upon them. They have sped according to their own choice. They threw their stake on the commandments of the law; and, not having won the length of perfect obedience thereunto, nothing remains but that they must abide its condemnation.

Now what they did, the natural legality of the human heart prompts the men of all ages to do. Our first, our natural tendency, is to seek after a righteousness—and that by a conformity to the rule of perfect righteousness. Did we attain the righteousness, we would thereby acquire a title to the reward. But the universal fact is that none do attain; and hence, with all who persist in seeking life by the law, there is but one or other term of this alternative. They either live in the apathy of a false and an ill-founded peace, or they live in the alarm of a well-founded terror—on good terms with themselves because of their imagined adequate fulfilment of the demands of the law, or on bad terms with themselves because of their real distance and deficiency therefrom. And so they sink down into the state of mere formalists in obedience, or into the restless unconfirmed and withal most unfruitful as well as unhappy state of a perpetual fearfulness. In either state they are destitute of an availing righteousness for their acceptance with God. He will not, on the one hand, merely because men are satisfied with themselves, recognise

the incomplete the tainted offerings of their human imperfection—as if they made out a full and satisfying homage to that law, all whose demands are on the side of a personal spiritual and universal holiness. Neither, on the other hand, will He sustain the dread and the distress and the painful anxieties of those who are not satisfied with themselves as a sufficient homage done to His law. What He wants with them further is, that they should do homage to His gospel. It is well that they have such a true discernment of God's law, as clearly to perceive, that no effort of theirs can reach upward to its sublime and empyreal elevation. But is also essential, that they should have such a true discernment of His grace, as to perceive, that, by its condescensions and by its offers, it reaches downward even to a worthlessness as humbling and as polluted as theirs. It is right that they should defer to the terror of those penalties which are denounced by the one; but it is equally right that they should defer to the truth of those promises which are held forth by the other. They ought to tremble, when bethinking them of their violations of the law; but they ought to feel re-assured, and to cease from trembling, when bethinking themselves of the sufficiency of the gospel. If it be an offence to have done disobedience to the precepts of His authority, it is also an offence to have done discredit to the overtures of His good-will. And so we read of the fearful and the unbelieving, as well as of the presumptuously secure, that both alike have a place assigned to them in the abodes of condemnation.

Ver. 33. 'As it is written, Behold I lay in Zion

a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence, and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.'

Our only method of escape from this is by fleeing unto Christ, and casting a confidence upon Him which shall never be put to shame. He is represented as being to some a stumbling-stone and rock of offence. It were entering upon a subject far too wide for us at present, did we enlarge upon all the varieties of that repugnance which is felt by men towards Christ—the absolute nausea of some at the very utterance of His name—the utter distaste for all conversation regarding Him—the antipathy, nay even hatred, which rises in the bosoms of many against His peculiarly marked and devoted followers; and, along with the toleration which very generally obtains for a meagre and moderate and mitigated Christianity, the secret revolt and the open declaration against those, who carry the doctrines and the demands of Christianity to what is apprehended to be a great deal to far. In a certain decent and regulated proportion, it is borne with; but very apt to be impatiently or indignantly flung at, when it offers to engross the whole heart, or to make too large or ostensible an inroad on the state and history of human affairs. But for a field of so much extent and latitude, we verily at present have no time; and must be content now with but one observation on a certain apparent crossness or contrariety of sentiment in the doctrines of Christ and His Apostles—which has an effect rather to gravel the understanding, than to alienate the affections of men. We advert to the place which the law and the

works of the law have in the theological system of the New Testament—where at one time they are set aside as utterly insignificant; and at another it seems to be represented as the very end, as the ultimate landing-place of Christianity, to make its disciples zealous and perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. There is the semblance of a most obvious, nay very glaring inconsistency here, which does embarrass even honest enquirers; and put them at a loss for the right adjustment of this whole question. It is a question which stumbles them, which perplexes them, and has all the effect of a painful and puzzling ambiguity upon their minds. It is not too much to say that the disgrace and the disparagement which appear to be cast by the men called evangelical, on the worth and the importance and the noble character of virtue, constitute at least one of the offences, one ground of strong and sensitive aversion, against the truth as it is in Jesus.

I cannot pretend at present to a full deliverance upon this subject; and will therefore only suggest a distinction which can be stated in one sentence; and should, as far as that goes, be all the more memorable; and which, if duly pondered upon, will achieve for you I think the extrication of this whole difficulty. The distinction is between the legal right to heaven which obedience may be supposed to confer, and the moral rightness of obedience in itself. When the New Testament affirms the nullity of good works, it is their nullity from their not being perfect to the object of establishing our legal right to the rewards of eternity. When the New Testa-

ment affirms the value of good works, it is their value, even though not yet perfect, in regard to their moral rightness — which moral rightness brightens more and more unto perfection, till at length it passes into the sacredness of heaven, and becomes meet for the exercises and the joys of eternity. A Christian utterly renounces all good works, as having any value in them to confer a legal right to heaven. And yet a Christian devotes himself assiduously to the performance of good works, as having in them that virtue of moral rightness which is in itself the very essence of heaven. For his legal right to heaven, his whole reliance is on the obedience of Christ, as that which hath alone won and purchased it. For his personal meetness for heaven, he plies all the strength that is in him, whether by nature or by grace, in order to perfect his own obedience.

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